1.24.22.

LIBRARY OF THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

PRINCETON, N. J.

PRESENTED BY

Mrs. William Swan.

Division SCC

Section 10,644

SERMONS

ON SEVERAL

SUBJECTS *and* OCCASIONS,

By the moſt Reverend

Dr. *JOHN TILLOTSON*,

LATE

Lord Archbiſhop of *Canterbury*.

VOLUME *the* SECOND.

LONDON:

Printed for *R. Ware*, *A. Ward*, *J.* and *P. Knapton*, *T. Longman*, *R. Hett*, *C. Hitch*, *J. Hodges*, *S. Auſten*, *J.* and *R. Tonſon*, *J.* and *H. Pemberton*, and *J. Rivington*.

M DCC XLII.

A

SERMON

Preached at the

First General Meeting

OF THE

Gentlemen and others born within the county of *York*.

To my Honoured

FRIENDS and COUNTRYMEN,

Mr. Hugh Frankland, Leonard Robinſon, Abrah. Fothergil, William Fairfax, Thomas Johnſon, John Hardeſty,

Mr. Gervas Wilcocks, George Pickering, Edward Duffield, John Topham, James Longbotham, Nathan. Holroyd,

Stewards of the YORKSHIRE Feaſt.

GENTLEMEN,

THIS ſermon, *which was firſt preached, and is now publiſhed at your deſires, I dedicate to your* names, *to whoſe prudence and care the direction and management of this firſt* general meeting *of our countrymen was committed; heartily wiſhing that it may be ſome way ſerviceable*

to

to the healing of our unhappy differences, and the restoring of unity and charity among christians, especially those of the protestant reform'd religion. I am,

GENTLEMEN,

Your affectionate Countryman

and humble Servant,

JO. TILLOTSON.

SERMON XX.

Preached at the firſt general meeting of the gentlemen and others, in and near *London*, born within the county of *York*.

JOHN xiii. 34, 35.

A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye alſo love one another: By this ſhall all men know that ye are my diſciples, if ye love one another.

AS the chriſtian religion in general, is the beſt philoſophy and moſt perfect inſtitution of life; containing in it the moſt entire and complete ſyſtem of moral rules and precepts that was ever yet extant in the world: ſo it peculiarly excels in the doctrine of love and charity; earneſtly recommending, ſtrictly injoining, and vehemently and almoſt perpetually preſſing and inculcating the excellency and neceſſity of this beſt of graces and virtues; and propounding to us for our imitation and encouragement, the moſt lively and heroical example of kindneſs and charity, that ever was, in the life and death of the great founder of our religion, "the au-"thor and finiſher of our faith," JESUS the SON of GOD.

So

SERM. XX. So that the goſpel, as it hath in all other parts of our duty cleared the dimneſs and obſcurity of natural light, and ſupplied the imperfections of former revelations, ſo doth it moſt eminently reign and triumph in this great and bleſſed virtue of charity; in which all the philoſophy and religions that had been before in the world, whether jewiſh or pagan, were ſo remarkably defective.

With great reaſon then doth our bleſſed SAVIOUR call this "a new commandment," and aſſert it to himſelf as a thing peculiar to his doctrine and religion; conſidering how imperfectly it had been taught and how little it had been practiſed in the world before: "A new commandment I give unto you, that "ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye "alſo love one another: By this ſhall all men know "that ye are my diſciples, if ye love one another."

I ſhall reduce my diſcourſe upon theſe words under theſe ſix heads.

Firſt, to inquire in what ſenſe our SAVIOUR calls this commandment of loving one another "a new "commandment."

Secondly, to declare to you the nature of this commandment, by inſtancing in the chief acts and properties of love.

Thirdly, to conſider the degrees and meaſures of our charity with regard to the ſeveral objects about which it is exerciſed.

Fourthly, our obligation to this duty not only from our SAVIOUR's authority, but likewiſe from our own nature, and from the reaſonableneſs and excellency of the thing commanded.

Fifthly,

Fifthly, the great example which is here propounded to our imitation; "as I have loved you, that ye "also love one another." SERM. XX.

Sixthly and laſtly, the place and rank which this precept holds in the chriſtian religion. Our SAVIOUR makes it the proper badge of a diſciple, the diſtinctive mark and character of our profeſſion; "by "this ſhall all men know that ye are my diſciples, if "ye love one another."

I. In what ſenſe our SAVIOUR calls this commandment of loving one another, "a new command-"ment;" not that it is abſolutely and altogether new, but upon ſome ſpecial accounts. For it is a branch of the ancient and primitive law of nature. Ariſtotle truly obſerves that upon grounds of natural kindred and likeneſs all men are friends, and kindly diſpoſed towards one another. And it is a known precept of the jewiſh religion, to love our neighbour as ourſelves.

In ſome ſenſe then, it is no new commandment; and ſo St. John, who was moſt likely to underſtand our SAVIOUR's meaning in this particular, (all his preaching and writing being almoſt nothing elſe but an inculcating of this one precept) explains this matter, telling us that in ſeveral reſpects it was, and it was not a new commandment, 1 John ii. 7, 8. "bre-"thren, I write no new commandment unto you, "but that which ye had from the beginning;" that is, from ancient times: but then he corrects himſelf; "Again," πάλιν, but yet, "a new commandment "I write unto you." So that though it was not abſolutely new, yet upon divers conſiderable accounts it was ſo, and in a peculiar manner proper to the

1

SERM. XX.

evangelical inſtitution; and is in ſo expreſs and particular a manner aſcribed to the teaching of the HOLY GHOST, which was conferr'd upon chriſtians by the faith of the goſpel, as if there hardly needed any outward inſtruction and exhortation to that purpoſe, 1 Theſſ. iv. 9. "But as touching brotherly love, ye "need not that I write unto you, for ye yourſelves "are θεοδίδακτοι, divinely taught and inſpired to "love one another."

This commandment then of loving one another is by our LORD and SAVIOUR ſo much enlarged as to the object of it, beyond what either the Jews or heathens did underſtand it to be, extending to all mankind, and even to our greateſt enemies; ſo greatly advanced and heightned as to the degree of it, even to the laying down of our lives for one another; ſo effectually taught, ſo mightily encouraged, ſo very much urged and inſiſted upon, that it may very well be called "a new commandment:" for though it was not altogether unknown to mankind before, yet it was never ſo taught, ſo encouraged; never was ſuch an illuſtrious example given of it, never ſo much weight and ſtreſs laid upon it by any philoſophy or religion that was before in the world.

II. I ſhall endeavour to declare to you the nature of this commandment, or the duty required by it. And that will beſt be done, by inſtancing in the chief acts and properties of love and charity. As, humanity and kindneſs in all our carriage and behaviour towards one another; for love ſmooths the diſpoſitions of men ſo that they are not apt to grate upon one another: next, to rejoice in the good and happineſs of one another, and to grieve at their evils

and

and sufferings; for love unites the interests of men so as to make them affected with what happens to another as if it were in some sort their own case: then, to contribute as much as in us lies to the happiness of one another, by relieving one another's wants and redressing their misfortunes: again, tenderness of their good name and reputation; a proneness to interpret all the words and actions of men to the best sense; patience and forbearance towards one another; and when differences happen, to manage them with all possible calmness and kindness, and to be ready to forgive and to be reconciled to one another; to pray one for another; and if occasion be, at least if the publick good of christianity require it, to be ready to lay down our lives for our brethren, and to sacrifice ourselves for the furtherance of their salvation. SERM. XX.

III. We will consider the degrees and measures of our charity, with regard to the various objects about which it is exercised.

And as to the negative part of this duty, it is to be extended equally towards all. We are not to hate or bear ill-will to any man, or to do him any harm or mischief; love worketh no evil to his neighbour. Thus much charity we are to exercise towards all without any exception, without any difference.

And as to the positive part of this duty, we should bear an universal good-will to all men, wishing every man's happiness, and praying for it as heartily as for our own: and if we be sincere herein, we shall be ready upon all occasions to procure and promote the welfare of all men. But the outward acts and testimonies of our charity neither can be actually extended to all, nor ought to be to all alike. We do not

SERM. XX.

know the wants of all, and therefore our knowledge of perſons, and of their conditions, doth neceſſarily limit the effects of our charity within a certain compaſs; and of thoſe we do know, we can but relieve a ſmall part for want of ability. Whence it becomes neceſſary, that we ſet ſome rules to ourſelves for the more diſcreet ordering of our charity; ſuch as theſe: caſes of extremity ought to take place of all other. Obligations of nature, and nearneſs of relation, ſeem to challenge the next place. Obligations of kindneſs, and upon the account of benefits received, may well lay the next claim. And then the houſhold of faith is to be peculiarly conſidered. And after theſe, the merit of the perſons, and all circumſtances belonging to them, are to be weighed and valued; thoſe who labour in an honeſt calling, but are oppreſs'd with their charge; thoſe who are fallen from a plentiful condition, eſpecially by misfortune and the providence of GOD, without their own fault; thoſe who have relieved others, and have been eminently charitable and beneficial to mankind; and laſtly, thoſe whoſe viſible neceſſities and infirmities of body or mind, whether by age or by accident, do plead for them: all theſe do challenge our more eſpecial regard and conſideration.

IV. We will conſider our obligations to this duty, not only from our SAVIOUR's authority, but likewiſe from our own nature, and from the reaſonableneſs and excellency of the thing commanded. This is the commandment of the SON of GOD, who came down from heaven with full authority to declare the will of GOD to us. And this is peculiarly "his com-"mandment," which he urgeth upon his diſciples ſo earneſtly,

earneſtly, and ſo as if he almoſt required nothing elſe in compariſon of this. John xv. 12. "This "is my commandment, that ye love one another:" and ver. 17. "Theſe things I command you, that "ye love one another." As if this were the end of all his precepts, and of his whole doctrine, to bring us to the practice of this duty. And ſo St. John, the loving and beloved diſciple, ſpeaks of it as the great meſſage which the SON of GOD was to deliver to mankind, 1 John iii. 11. "This is the meſſage "which ye have heard from the beginning, that ye "ſhould love one another." And ver. 23. "This "is his commandment, that we ſhould believe on the "name of his SON JESUS CHRIST, and love one "another, as he gave us commandment." And chap. iv. ver. 21. "This commandment have we "from him, that he who loveth GOD, love his bro-"ther alſo." SERM. XX.

But beſides the authority of our SAVIOUR, we have a precedent obligation to it from our own nature, and from the reaſonableneſs and excellency of the thing itſelf. The frame of our nature diſpoſeth us to it, and our inclination to ſociety, in which there can be no pleaſure, no advantage, without mutual love and kindneſs. And equity alſo calls for it, for that we ourſelves wiſh and expect kindneſs from others is conviction enough to us that we owe it to others. The fulfilling of this law is the great perfection of our natures, the advancement and enlargement of our ſouls, the chief ornament and beauty of a great mind. It makes us like to GOD, the beſt and moſt perfect and happieſt being, in that which is the prime excellency and happineſs and glory of the divine nature. And

SERM. XX.

And the advantages of this temper are unſpeakable and innumerable. It freeth our ſouls from thoſe unruly and troubleſom and diſquieting paſſions which are the great torment of our ſpirits; from anger and envy, from malice and revenge, from jealouſy and diſcontent. It makes our minds calm and chearful, and puts our ſouls into an eaſy poſture, and into good humour, and maintains us in the poſſeſſion and enjoyment of ourſelves: it preſerves men from many miſchiefs and inconveniences, to which enmity and ill-will do perpetually expoſe them: it is apt to make friends, and to gain enemies, and to render every condition either pleaſant, or eaſy, or tolerable to us. So that to love others, is the trueſt love to ourſelves, and doth redound to our own unſpeakable benefit and advantage in all reſpects.

It is a very conſiderable part of our duty, and almoſt equall'd by our SAVIOUR with the firſt and great commandment of the law. It is highly acceptable to GOD, moſt beneficial to others, and very comfortable to ourſelves. It is the eaſieſt of all duties, and it makes all others eaſy; the pleaſure of it makes the pains to ſignify nothing, and the delightful reflexion upon it afterwards is a moſt ample reward of it. It is a duty in every man's power to perform, how ſtrait and indigent ſoever his fortune and condition be. The pooreſt man may be as charitable as a prince; he may have as much kindneſs in his heart, though his hand cannot be ſo bountiful and munificent. Our SAVIOUR inſtanceth in the giving of a cup of cold water, as a charity that will be highly accepted and rewarded by GOD. And one of the moſt celebrated charities that ever was, how

ſmall

ſmall was it for the matter of it, and yet how great in regard of the mind that gave it? I mean the widow's two mites, which ſhe caſt into the treaſury: one could hardly give leſs, and yet none can give more, for ſhe gave all that ſhe had. All theſe excellencies and advantages of love and charity, which I have briefly recounted, are ſo many arguments, ſo many obligations to the practice of this duty.

V. We will conſider the great inſtance and example which is here propounded to our imitation; "as "I have loved you, that ye alſo love one another." The SON of GOD's becoming man, his whole life, his bitter death and paſſion, all that he did and all that he ſuffered, was one great and continued proof and evidence of his mighty love to mankind. The greateſt inſtance of love among men, and that too but very rare, is for a man to lay down his life for another, for his friend; but the SON of GOD died for all mankind, and we were all his enemies. And ſhould we not chearfully imitate the example of that great love and charity, the effects whereof are ſo comfortable, ſo beneficial, ſo happy to every one of us. Had he not loved us, and died for us, we had certainly periſh'd, we had been miſerable and undone to all eternity.

And to perpetuate this great example of charity, and that it might be always freſh in our memories, the great ſacrament of our religion was on purpoſe inſtituted for the commemoration of this great love of the SON of GOD, in laying down his life, and ſhedding his precious blood for the wicked and rebellious race of mankind. But I have not time to enlarge upon this noble argument as it deſerves.

VI. The

SERM. XX.

VI. The laſt thing to be conſidered is the place and rank which this precept and duty holds in the chriſtian religion. Our bleſſed SAVIOUR here makes it the proper badge and cogniſance of our profeſſion: "by this ſhall all men know that ye are my "diſciples, if ye love one another." The different ſects among the Jews had ſome peculiar character to diſtinguiſh them from one another: the ſcholars of the ſeveral great rabbi's among them had ſome peculiar ſayings and opinions, ſome cuſtoms and traditions whereby they were ſeverally known; and ſo likewiſe the diſciples of John the baptiſt were particularly remarkable for their great auſterities. In alluſion to theſe diſtinctions of ſects and ſchools among the Jews, our SAVIOUR fixeth upon this mark and character whereby his diſciples ſhould be known from the diſciples of any other Inſtitution, a mighty love and affection to one another.

Other ſects were diſtinguiſh'd by little opinions, or by ſome external rites and obſervances in religion; but our SAVIOUR pitcheth upon that which is the moſt real and ſubſtantial, the moſt large and extenſive, the moſt uſeful and beneficial, the moſt humane and the moſt divine quality of which we are capable.

This was his great commandment to his diſciples, before he left the world: this was the legacy he left them, and the effect of his laſt prayers for them: and for this end, among others, he inſtituted the ſacrament of his bleſſed body and blood, to be a lively remembrance of his great charity to mankind, and a perpetual bond of love and union amongſt his followers.

And

SERM. XX.

And the apoſtles of our LORD and SAVIOUR do upon all occaſions recommend this to us, as a principal duty and part of our religion; telling us, that in CHRIST JESUS, that is, in the chriſtian religion, nothing will avail, no not faith itſelf, unleſs it be enlivened and inſpired by charity; that love is the end of the commandment, τέλος τῆς ἀγγελίας, the end of the evangelical declaration, the firſt fruit of the SPIRIT, the ſpring and root of all thoſe graces and virtues which concern our duty towards one another: that it is the ſum and abridgement, the accompliſhment and fulfilling of the whole law: that without this, whatever we pretend to in chriſtianity, we are nothing, and our religion is vain: that this is the greateſt of all graces and virtues, greater than faith and hope; and of perpetual uſe and duration, charity never fails.

And therefore they exhort us above all things to endeavour after it, as the crown of all other virtues: "Above all things have fervent charity among your "ſelves," ſaith St. Peter: and St. Paul, having enumerated moſt other chriſtian virtues, exhorts us above all to ſtrive after this, "and above all theſe things "put on charity, which is the bond of perfection." This St. John makes one of the moſt certain ſigns of our love to GOD, and the want of it an undeniable argument of the contrary: "If a man ſay I "love GOD, and hateth his brother, he is a lyar; "for he who loveth not his brother whom he hath "ſeen, how can he love GOD whom he hath not "ſeen?" This he declares to be one of the beſt evidences that we are in a ſtate of grace and ſalvation,

I

SERM. XX. "Hereby we know that we are paſſed from death to "life, becauſe we love the brethren."

So that well might our bleſſed SAVIOUR chooſe this for the badge of his diſciples, and make it the great precept of the beſt and moſt perfect inſtitution. Other things might have ſerved better for pomp and oſtentation, and have more gratified the curioſity, or enthuſiaſm, or ſuperſtition of mankind, but there is no quality in the world which, upon a ſober and impartial conſideration, is of a more ſolid and intrinſick value.

And in the firſt ages of chriſtianity, the chriſtians were very eminent for this virtue, and particularly noted for it; *Nobis notam inurit apud quoſdam*, "it is a mark and brand ſet upon us by ſome," ſaith Tertullian; and he tells us, that it was proverbially ſaid among the heathen, "Behold how theſe "chriſtians love one another." Lucian, that great ſcoffer at all religion, acknowledgeth in behalf of chriſtians, that this was the great principle which their maſter had inſtill'd into them: And Julian, the bittereſt enemy that chriſtianity ever had, could not forbear to propound to the heathen for an example the charity of the Galileans, for ſo, by way of reproach, he calls the chriſtians, "who (ſays he) gave "up themſelves to humanity and kindneſs;" which he acknowledgeth to have been very much to the advantage and reputation of our religion: and in the ſame letter to Arſacius, the heathen high-prieſt of Galatia, he gives this memorable teſtimony of the chriſtians, that their charity was not limited and confin'd only to themſelves, but extended even to their

their enemies; which could not be ſaid either of the jews or heathens: his words are theſe, "It is a "ſhame, that when the Jews ſuffer none of theirs "to beg, and the impious Galileans relieve not on-"ly their own, but thoſe alſo of our religion, that "we only ſhould be defective in ſo neceſſary a duty." By all which it is evident that love and charity is not only the great precept of our SAVIOUR, but was in thoſe firſt and beſt times the general practice of his diſciples, and acknowledged by the heathens as a very peculiar and remarkable quality in them. SERM. XX.

The application I ſhall make of this diſcourſe ſhall be threefold.

1. With relation to the church of Rome.

2. With regard to ourſelves who profeſs the proteſtant reform'd religion.

3. With a more particular reſpect to the occaſion of this meeting.

I. Firſt, with relation to the church of Rome; which we cannot chooſe but think of, whenever we ſpeak of charity and loving one another; eſpecially having had ſo late a diſcovery of their affection to us, and ſo conſiderable a teſtimony of the kindneſs and charity which they deſign'd towards us: ſuch as may juſtly make the ears of all that hear it to tingle, and render popery execrable and infamous, a frightful and hateful thing to the end of the world.

It is now but too viſible how groſly this great commandment of our SAVIOUR is contradicted, not only by the practices of thoſe in that communion, from the pope down to the meaneſt frier; but by the very doctrines and principles, by the genius and ſpirit of that religion, which is wholly calcula-

SERM. XX.

ted for cruelty and perſecution. Where now is that mark of a diſciple, ſo much inſiſted upon by our LORD and MASTER, to be found in that church? And yet what is the chriſtian church but the ſociety and community of CHRIST's diſciples? Surely in all reaſon, that which our LORD made the diſtinctive mark and character of his diſciples, ſhould be the principal mark of a true church. Bellarmine reckons up no leſs than fifteen marks of the true church, all which the church of Rome arrogates to herſelf alone: but he wiſely forgot that which is worth all the reſt, and which our SAVIOUR inſiſts upon as the chief of all other, a ſincere love and charity to all chriſtians: this he knew would by no means agree to his own church.

But for all that, it is very reaſonable that churches as well as particular chriſtians ſhould be judged by their charity. The church of Rome would engroſs all faith to herſelf: faith in its utmoſt perfection, to the degree and pitch of infallibility; and they allow no body in the world, beſides themſelves, no though they believe all the articles of the apoſtles creed, to have one grain of true faith; becauſe they do not believe upon the authority of their church, which they pretend to be the only foundation of true faith. This is a moſt arrogant and vain pretence; but admit it were true, yet in the judgment of St. Paul, "Though they had all faith, if they have not cha-"rity, they are nothing."

The greateſt wonder of all is this, that they who hate and perſecute chriſtians moſt, do all this while, the moſt confidently of all others, pretend to be the diſciples of CHRIST, and will allow none to be ſo

but

but themſelves. That church which excommuni- SERM. XX.
cates all other chriſtian churches in the world, and if ſhe could, would extirpate them out of the world, will yet needs aſſume to herſelf to be the only chriſtian church: as if our SAVIOUR had ſaid, "Here- "by ſhall all men know that ye are my diſciples, if "ye hate, and excommunicate, and kill one ano- "ther. What ſhall be done unto thee, thou falſe "tongue?" thou empty and impudent pretence of chriſtianity!

II. Secondly, with relation to ourſelves, who profeſs the proteſtant reformed religion. How is this great precept of our SAVIOUR not only ſhamefully neglected, but plainly violated by us? and that not only by private hatred and ill-will, quarrels and contentions in our civil converſation and intercourſe with one another; but by moſt unchriſtian diviſions and animoſities in that common relation wherein we ſtand to one another, as brethren, as chriſtians, as proteſtants.

Have we not all one father? hath not one GOD created us? and are we not in a more peculiar and eminent manner brethren, being "all the children "of GOD by faith in JESUS CHRIST?" are we not all members of the ſame body, and partakers of the ſame ſpirit, and heirs of the ſame bleſſed hopes of eternal life?

So that being brethren upon ſo many accounts, and by ſo many bonds and endearments all united one to another, and all travelling towards the ſame heavenly country, why do we fall out by the way, ſince we be brethren? why do we not, as becomes brethren, dwell together in unity? but are ſo apt to

quarrel

SERM. XX.

quarrel and break out into heats, to crumble into ſects and parties, to divide and ſeparate from one another upon every ſlight and trifling occaſion.

Give me leave a little more fully to expoſtulate this matter, but very calmly and in the ſpirit of meekneſs, and in the name of our dear LORD who loved us at ſuch a rate as to die for us, to recommend to you this new commandment of his, "that "ye love one another:" which is almoſt a new commandment ſtill, and hardly the worſe for wearing; ſo ſeldom is it put on, and ſo little hath it been practiſed among chriſtians for ſeveral ages.

Conſider ſeriouſly with yourſelves; ought not the great matters wherein we are agreed, our union in the doctrines of the chriſtian religion, and in all the neceſſary articles of that faith which was once delivered to the ſaints, in the ſame ſacraments, and in all the ſubſtantial parts of GOD's worſhip, and in the great duties and virtues of the chriſtian life, to be of greater force to unite us, than difference in doubtful opinions, and in little rites and circumſtances of worſhip to divide and break us?

Are not the things about which we differ, in their nature indifferent, that is, things about which there ought to be no difference among wiſe men? Are they not at a great diſtance from the life and eſſence of religion, and rather good or bad as they tend to the peace and unity of the church, or are made uſe of to ſchiſm and faction, than either neceſſary or evil in themſelves? and ſhall little ſcruples weigh ſo far with us, as, by breaking the peace of the church about them, to endanger our whole religion? Shall we take one another by the throat for a hundred pence, when

when our common adverſary ſtands ready to clap upon us an action of ten thouſand talents? can we in good earneſt be contented that rather than the ſurplice ſhould not be thrown out, popery ſhould come in? and rather than receive the ſacrament in the humble, but indifferent, poſture of kneeling, to ſwallow the camel of tranſubſtantiation, and adore the elements of bread and wine for our GOD and SAVIOUR? and rather than to ſubmit to a ſet form of prayer, to have the ſervice of GOD perform'd in an unknown tongue? SERM. XX.

Are we not yet made ſenſible, at leaſt in this our day, by ſo clear a demonſtration as the providence of GOD hath lately given us: and had not he been infinitely merciful to us, might have proved the deareſt and moſt dangerous experiment that ever was: I ſay, are we not yet convinced, what mighty advantages our enemies have made of our diviſions, and what a plentiful harveſt they have had among us, during our differences, and upon occaſion of them; and how near their religion was to have enter'd in upon us at once, at thoſe wide breaches which we had made for it? And will we ſtill take counſel of our enemies, and chooſe to follow that courſe to which, of all other, they who hate us and ſeek our ruin would moſt certainly adviſe and direct us? Will we freely offer them that advantage which they would be contented to purchaſe at any rate?

Let us, after all our ſad experience, at laſt take warning to keep a ſtedfaſt eye upon our chief enemy, and not ſuffer ourſelves to be diverted from the conſideration and regard of our greateſt danger by the petty provocations of our friends; ſo I chooſe to call thoſe

SERM. XX.

thoſe who diſſent from us in leſſer matters, becauſe I would fain have them ſo, and they ought in all reaſon to be ſo: but however they behave themſelves, we ought not much to mind thoſe who only fling dirt at us, whilſt we are ſure there are others who fly at our throats, and ſtrike at our very hearts.

Let us learn this wiſdom of our enemies, who, though they have many great differences among themſelves, yet they have made a ſhift at this time to unite together to deſtroy us: and ſhall not we do as much to ſave ourſelves?

——— *fas eſt & ab hoſte doceri.*

It was a principle among the ancient Romans, a brave and wiſe people, *donare inimicitias Reipublicæ*, to give up and ſacrifice their private enmities and quarrels to the publick good and the ſafety of the commonwealth. And is it not to every conſiderate man as clear as the ſun at noonday, that nothing can maintain and ſupport the proteſtant religion amongſt us, and found our church upon a rock, ſo that "when "the rain falls, and the winds blow, and the floods "beat upon it, it ſhall ſtand firm and unſhaken:" That nothing can be a bulwark of ſufficient force to reſiſt all the arts and attempts of popery, but an eſtabliſh'd national religion, firmly united and compacted in all the parts of it? is it not plain to every eye, that little ſects and ſeparate congregations can never do it? but will be like a foundation of ſand to a weighty building, which whatever ſhew it may make, cannot ſtand long, becauſe it wants union at the foundation, and for that reaſon muſt neceſſarily want ſtrength and firmneſs.

It is not for private persons to undertake in matters of public concernment; but I think we have no cause to doubt but the governors of our church (notwithstanding all the advantages of authority, and we think of reason too on our side) are persons of that piety and prudence, that for peace sake, and in order to a firm union among protestants, they would be content, if that would do it, not to insist upon little things; but to yield them up, whether to the infirmity or importunity, or, perhaps in some very few things, to the plausible exceptions of those who differ from us.

But then surely, on the other side, men ought to bring along with them a peaceable dispositon, and a mind ready to comply with the church in which they were born and baptized, in all reasonable and lawful things; and desirous upon any terms that are tolerable to return to the communion of it: a mind free from passion and prejudice, from peevish exceptions, and groundless and endless scruples; not apt to insist upon little cavils and objections, to which the very best things, and the greatest and clearest truths in the world are and always will be liable: and whatever they have been heretofore, to be "hence-"forth no more children, tossed to and fro, and car-"ried about with every wind of doctrine, by the "slight of men, and cunning craftiness of those who "lie in wait to deceive."

And if we were thus affected on all hands, we might yet be a happy church and nation; if we would govern ourselves by these rules, and walk according to them, "peace would be upon us, and "mercy, and on the Israel of GOD."

I.

SERM. XX.

III. Thirdly, I ſhall conclude all with a few words in relation to the occaſion of this preſent meeting. I have all this while been recommending to you, from the authority and example of our bleſſed SAVIOUR, and from the nature and reaſon of the thing itſelf, this moſt excellent grace and virtue of charity, in the moſt proper acts and inſtances of it: but beſides particular acts of charity to be exerciſed upon emergent occaſions, there are likewiſe charitable cuſtoms which are highly commendable, becauſe they are more certain and conſtant, of a larger extent, and of a longer continuance: as the meeting of the ſons of the clergy, which is now form'd and eſtabliſh'd into a charitable corporation: and the anniverſary meetings of thoſe of the ſeveral counties of England, who reſide, or happen to be in London; for two of the beſt and nobleſt ends that can be, the maintaining of friendſhip, and the promoting of charity. Theſe, and others of the like kind, I call charitable cuſtoms, which of late years have very much obtained in this great and famous city. And it cannot but be a great pleaſure and ſatisfaction to all good men, to ſee ſo generous, ſo humane, ſo chriſtian a diſpoſition to prevail and reign ſo much amongſt us.

The ſtrange overflowing of vice and wickedneſs in our land, and the prodigious increaſe and impudence of infidelity and impiety, hath of late years boded very ill to us, and brought terrible judgments upon this city and nation, and ſeems ſtill to threaten us with more and greater: and the greateſt comfort I have had under theſe ſad apprehenſions of GOD'S diſpleaſure hath been this, that though bad men were perhaps never worſe in any age, yet the good,

good, who I hope are not a few, were never more truly and ſubſtantially good: I do verily believe there never were, in any time, greater and more real effects of charity; not from a blind ſuperſtition, and an ignorant zeal, and a mercenary and arrogant and preſumptuous principle of merit, but from a ſound knowledge, and a ſincere love and obedience to GOD, or, as the apoſtle expreſſes it, "out of a pure "heart, and of a good conſcience, and of faith un-"feigned."

And who, that loves GOD and religion, can chooſe but take great contentment to ſee ſo general and forward an inclination in people this way? which hath been very much cheriſhed of late years by this ſort of meetings: and that to very good purpoſe and effect, in many charitable contributions diſpoſed in the beſt and wiſeſt ways: and which likewiſe hath tended very much to the reconciling of the minds of men, and the allaying of thoſe fierce heats and animoſities which have been cauſed by our civil confuſions and religious diſtractions. For there is nothing many times wanting to take away prejudice, and to extinguiſh hatred and ill-will, but an opportunity for men to ſee and underſtand one another; by which they will quickly perceive, that they are not ſuch monſters as they have been repreſented one to another at a diſtance.

We are, I think, one of the laſt counties of England that have entred into this friendly and charitable kind of ſociety; let us make amends for our late ſetting out by quickning our pace, ſo that we may overtake and outſtrip thoſe who are gone before us: let not our charity partake of the coldneſs of our

SERM. XX.

climate, but let us endeavour that it may be equal to the extent of our country; and as we are incomparably the greateſt county of England, let it appear that we are ſo by the largeneſs and extent of our charity.

"O LORD, who haſt taught us that all our doings without charity are nothing, ſend thy HOLY GHOST, and pour into our hearts that moſt excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace, and of all virtues: without which whoſoever liveth, is counted dead before thee. Grant this for thy only SON JESUS CHRIST's ſake."

"Now the GOD of peace, who brought again from the dead our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the great ſhepherd of the ſheep, through the blood of the everlaſting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleaſing in his ſight, through JESUS CHRIST, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON XXI.

Preached at *Whitehall*, *April* 4, 1679.

---

1 JOHN iv. 1.

Beloved, believe not every ſpirit, but try the ſpirits whether they are of GOD; *becauſe many falſe prophets are gone out into the world.*

THIS caution and counſel was given upon occaſion of the falſe prophets and teachers that were riſen up in the beginning of the chriſtian church, who endeavoured to ſeduce men from the true doctrine of the goſpel delivered by the apoſtles of our LORD and SAVIOUR. And theſe teaching contrary things, could not both be from GOD; and therefore St. John calls upon chriſtians to examine the doctrines and pretences of thoſe new teachers, whether they were from GOD or not. "Be- "lieve not every ſpirit;" that is, not every one that takes upon him to be inſpired, and to be a teacher come from GOD: "But try the ſpirits;" that is, examine thoſe that make this pretence, whether it be real or not; and examine the doctrines which they bring, becauſe there are many impoſtors abroad in the world.

This is the plain ſenſe of the words: in which there are contained theſe four propoſitions.

Firſt, that men may, and often do, falſly pretend to inſpiration. And this is the reaſon upon which the apoſtle grounds this exhortation: "becauſe many "falſe

SERM. XXI.

" falſe prophets are gone out into the world," therefore we ſhould try who are true, and who are falſe.

Secondly, we are not to believe every one that pretends to be inſpired, and to teach a divine doctrine: this follows upon the former; becauſe men may falſly pretend to inſpiration, therefore we are not to believe every one that makes this pretence. For any man that hath but confidence enough, and conſcience little enough, may pretend to come from GOD. And if we admit all pretences of this kind, we lie at the mercy of every crafty and confident man, to be led by him into what deluſions he pleaſeth.

Thirdly, neither are we to reject all that pretend to come from GOD. This is ſufficiently implied in the text; for when the apoſtle ſays, " believe not " every ſpirit," he ſuppoſeth we are to believe ſome; and when he ſaith, " try the ſpirits whether they " be of GOD," he ſuppoſeth ſome to be of GOD, and that thoſe which are ſo are to be believed. Theſe three obſervations are ſo plain, that I need only to name them to make way for the

Fourth, which I principally deſigned to inſiſt upon from theſe words. And that is this, " that there is " ſome way to diſcern mere pretenders to inſpiration, " from thoſe who are truly and divinely inſpired: " and this is neceſſarily implied in the apoſtle's bidding us to " try the ſpirits whether they are of GOD." For it were in vain to make any trial, if there be no way to diſcern between pretended and real inſpiration.

Now the handling of this will give occaſion to two very material enquiries, and uſeful to be reſolved.

I. How

SERM. XXI.

I. How we may diſcern between true and counterfeit doctrines: thoſe which really are from GOD, and thoſe which only pretend to be ſo?

II. To whom this judgment of diſcerning doth appertain?

I. How we may diſcern between true and counterfeit doctrines and revelations? for the clearing of this I ſhall lay down theſe following propoſitions.

1. That reaſon is the faculty whereby revelations are to be diſcerned; or to uſe the phraſe in the text, it is that whereby we are to judge what ſpirits are of GOD, and what not. For all revelation from GOD ſuppoſeth us to be men, and to be endued with reaſon; and therefore it does not create new faculties in us, but propounds new objects to that faculty which was in us before. Whatever doctrines GOD reveals to men are propounded to their underſtandings, and by this faculty we are to examine all doctrines which pretend to be from GOD, and upon examination to judge whether there be reaſon to receive them as divine, or to reject them as impoſtures.

2. All ſupernatural revelation ſuppoſeth the truth of the principles of natural religion. We muſt firſt be aſſured that there is a GOD, before we can know that he hath made any revelation of himſelf: and we muſt know that his words are true, otherwiſe there were no ſufficient reaſon to believe the revelations which he makes to us: and we muſt believe his authority over us, and that he will reward our obedience to his laws, and puniſh our breach of them; otherwiſe there would neither be ſufficient obligation nor encouragement to obedience. Theſe and many other things are ſuppoſed to be true,

and

SERM. XXI.

and naturally known to us, antecedently to all ſupernatural revelation; otherwiſe the revelations of GOD would ſignify nothing to us, nor be of any force with us.

3. All reaſonings about divine revelations muſt neceſſarily be governed by the principles of natural religion: that is, by thoſe apprehenſions which men naturally have of the divine perfections, and the clear notions of good and evil which are imprinted upon our natures. Becauſe we have no other way to judge what is worthy of GOD, and credible to be revealed by him, and what not, but by the natural notions which we have of GOD and of his eſſential perfections: which, becauſe we know him to be immutable, we have reaſon to believe he will never contradict. And by theſe principles likewiſe, we are to interpret what GOD hath revealed; and when any doubt ariſeth concerning the meaning of any divine revelation (as that of the holy ſcriptures) we are to govern ourſelves in the interpretation of it by what is moſt agreeable to thoſe natural notions which we have of GOD, and we have all the reaſon in the world to reject that ſenſe which is contrary thereto. For inſtance, when GOD is repreſented in ſcripture as having a human ſhape, eyes, ears and hands, the notions which men naturally have of the divine nature and perfections do ſufficiently direct us to interpret theſe expreſſions in a ſenſe worthy of GOD, and agreeable to his perfections: and therefore it is reaſonable to underſtand them as rather ſpoken to our capacity, and in a figure, than to be literally intended. And this will proportionably hold in many other caſes.

4. Nothing

4. Nothing ought to be received as a revelation from GOD which plainly contradicts the principles of natural religion, or overthrows the certainty of them. For inſtance, it were in vain to pretend a revelation from GOD, "that there is no GOD," becauſe this is a contradiction in terms. So likewiſe to pretend a command from GOD, "That we are to "hate and deſpiſe him;" becauſe it is not credible that GOD ſhould require any thing of reaſonable creatures ſo unſuitable to their natures, and to their obligations to him; beſides that ſuch a law as this does tacitly involve a contradiction; becauſe upon ſuch a ſuppoſition, to deſpiſe GOD would be to obey him; and yet to obey him is certainly to honour him. So that in this caſe to honour God, and to deſpiſe him, would be the ſame thing, and equal contempts of him. In like manner it would be vain to pretend any revelation from GOD, "that there is "no life after this, nor rewards and puniſhments "in another world:" becauſe this is contrary to thoſe natural apprehenſions which have generally poſſeſt mankind, and would take away the main force and ſanction of the divine laws. The like may be ſaid concerning any pretended revelation from GOD, which evidently contradicts thoſe natural notions which men have of good and evil; as, "that "GOD ſhould command or allow ſedition and rebel-"lion, perfidiouſneſs and perjury;" becauſe the practice of theſe would be apparently deſtructive of the peace and happineſs of mankind, and would naturally bring confuſion into the world: but "GOD is "not the GOD of confuſion, but of order," which St. Paul appeals to as a principle naturally known.

SERM. XXI.

Upon the ſame account nothing ought to be entertained as a divine revelation which overthrows the certainty of the principles of natural religion; becauſe that would take away the certainty of divine revelation itſelf, which ſuppoſeth the truth of thoſe principles. For inſtance, whoever pretends any revelation that brings the providence of GOD into queſtion, does by that very thing make ſuch a revelation queſtionable. For if GOD take no care of the world, have no concernment for humane affairs, why ſhould we believe that he makes any revelation of his will to men? And by this principle Moſes will have falſe prophets to be tried: Deut. xiii. 1. "If there ariſe "among you a prophet, and giveth thee a ſign or "wonder, and the ſign or the wonder come to paſs, "whereof he ſpake unto thee, ſaying, let us go after "other gods, and let us ſerve them; thou ſhalt not "hearken unto the words of that prophet:" and he gives the reaſon of this, ver. 5. "becauſe he hath "ſpoken unto you to turn you away from the LORD "your GOD, which brought you out of the land of "Egypt." Here is a caſe wherein a falſe prophet is ſuppoſed to work a true miracle to give credit to his doctrine (which in other caſes the ſcripture makes the ſign of a true prophet) but yet in this caſe he is to be rejected as an impoſtor: becauſe the doctrine he teacheth would draw men off from the worſhip of the true GOD who is naturally known, and had manifeſted himſelf to the people of Iſrael in ſo miraculous a manner, by bringing them out of the land of Egypt. So that a miracle is not enough to give credit to a prophet who teacheth any thing contrary to that natural notion which men have,

"That

" That there is but one GOD, who only ought to be " worſhipped." SERM. XXI.

5. Nothing ought to be received as a divine doctrine and revelation, without good evidence that it is ſo: that is, without ſome argument ſufficient to ſatisfy a prudent and conſiderate man. Now (ſuppoſing there be nothing in the matter of the revelation that is evidently contrary to the principles of natural religion, nor to any former revelation which hath already received a greater and more ſolemn atteſtation from GOD) miracles are owned by all mankind to be a ſufficient teſtimony to any perſon, or doctrine, that they are from GOD. This was the teſtimony which GOD gave to Moſes to ſatisfy the people of Iſrael that he had ſent him; Exod. iv. 1, 2. " Moſes " ſaid, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto " my voice: for they will ſay, the LORD hath not " appeared unto thee." Upon this GOD endues him with a power of miracles, to be an evidence to them, " that they may believe that the GOD of their fa- " thers, Abraham, Iſaac and Jacob, hath appeared " unto thee." And all along in the old teſtament, when GOD ſent his prophets to make a new revelation, or upon any ſtrange and extraordinary meſſage, he always gave credit to them by ſome ſign or wonder which they foretold or wrought. And when he ſent his SON into the world, he gave teſtimony to him by innumerable great and unqueſtionable miracles, more and greater than Moſes and all the prophets had wrought. And there was great reaſon for this: becauſe our SAVIOUR came not only to publiſh a new religion to the world, but to put an end to that religion which GOD had inſtituted before. And now

SERM. XXI.

that the goſpel hath had the confirmation of ſuch miracles as never were wrought upon any other occaſion, no evidence inferior to this can in reaſon controul this revelation, or give credit to any thing contrary to it. And therefore though the falſe prophets and Antichriſts, foretold by our SAVIOUR, did really work miracles, yet they were ſo inconſiderable in compariſon of our SAVIOUR's, that they deſerve no credit in oppoſition to that revelation which had ſo clear a teſtimony given to it from heaven by miracles, beſides all other concurring arguments to confirm it.

6. And laſtly, no argument is ſufficient to prove a doctrine or revelation to be from GOD, which is not clearer and ſtronger than the difficulties and objections againſt it: becauſe all aſſent is grounded upon evidence, and the ſtrongeſt and cleareſt evidence always carries it: but where the evidence is equal on both ſides, that can produce nothing but a ſuſpenſe and doubt in the mind whether the thing be true or not. If Moſes had not confuted Pharaoh's Magicians by working miracles which they could not work, they might reaſonably have diſputed it with him who had been the true prophet: but when he did works plainly above the power of their magick and the devil to do, then they ſubmitted and acknowledged that there was the finger of GOD. So likewiſe, though a perſon work a miracle (which ordinarily is a good evidence that he is ſent by GOD) yet if the doctrine he brings be plainly contrary to thoſe natural notions which we have of GOD, this is a better objection againſt the truth of this doctrine than the other is a proof of it; as is plain in the caſe

caſe which Moſes puts, Deut. xiii. which I mentioned before. SERM. XXI.

Upon the ſame account no man can reaſonably believe the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation to be revealed by GOD; becauſe every man hath as great evidence that tranſubſtantiation is falſe, as any man can pretend to have that GOD hath revealed any ſuch thing. Suppoſe tranſubſtantiation to be part of the chriſtian doctrine, it muſt have the ſame confirmation with the whole, and that is miracles: but of all doctrines in the world it is peculiarly incapable of being proved by a miracle. For if a miracle were wrought for the proof of it, the very ſame aſſurance which a man hath of the truth of the miracle, he hath of the falſhood of the doctrine, that is, the clear evidence of his ſenſes for both. For that there is a miracle wrought to prove, that what he ſees in the ſacrament is not bread but the body of CHRIST, he hath only the evidence of his ſenſes; and he hath the very ſame evidence to prove, that what he ſees in the ſacrament is not the body of CHRIST, but bread. So that here ariſeth a new controverſy, whether a man ſhould believe his ſenſes giving teſtimony againſt the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation, or bearing teſtimony to the miracle which is wrought to confirm that doctrine: for there is juſt the ſame evidence againſt the truth of the doctrine, which there is for the truth of the miracle. So that the argument for tranſubſtantiation, and the objection againſt it, do juſt balance one another; and where the weights in both ſcales are equal, it is impoſſible that the one ſhould weigh down the other; and conſequently tranſubſtantiation is not to

be

SERM. XXI.

be proved by a miracle; for that would be, to prove to a man by ſomething that he ſees, that he does not ſee what he ſees.

And thus I have endeavoured, as briefly and clearly as I could, to give ſatisfaction to the firſt enquiry I propounded, viz. how we may diſcern between true and counterfeit revelations and doctrines: I proceed now to the

II. To whom this judgment of diſcerning does appertain. Whether to chriſtians in general, or to ſome particular perſon or perſons, authoriſed by GOD to judge for the reſt of mankind, by whoſe judgment all men are concluded and bound up. And this is an enquiry of no ſmall importance; becauſe it is one of the moſt fundamental points in difference between us and the church of Rome. And however in many particular controverſies, as concerning tranſubſtantiation, the communion in one kind, the ſervice of GOD in an unknown tongue; the buſineſs of indulgences, the invocation of ſaints, the worſhip of images, they are not able to offer any thing that is fit to move a reaſonable and conſiderate man; yet in this controverſy, concerning the judge of controverſies, they are not deſtitute of ſome ſpecious appearance of reaſon which deſerves to be weighed and conſidered. Therefore that we may examine this matter to the bottom, I ſhall do theſe three things.

1. Lay down ſome cautions and limitations whereby we may underſtand how far the generality of chriſtians are allowed to judge in matters of religion.

2. I ſhall repreſent the grounds of this Principle.

3. Endea-

3. Endeavour to ſatisfy the main objections of our adverſaries againſt it: and likewiſe to ſhew, that there is no ſuch reaſon and neceſſity for an univerſal infallible judge as they pretend.

I. I ſhall lay down ſome cautions and limitations, by which we may underſtand how far the generality of chriſtians are allowed to judge in matters of religion.

Firſt, private perſons are only to judge for themſelves, and not to impoſe their judgment upon others, as if they had any authority over them. And this is reaſonable, becauſe if it were otherwiſe, a man would deprive others of that liberty which he aſſumes to himſelf, and which he can claim upon no other account, but becauſe it belongs to others equally with himſelf.

Secondly, this liberty of judging is not ſo to be underſtood as to take away the neceſſity and uſe of guides and teachers in religion. Nor can this be denied to be a reaſonable limitation; becauſe the knowledge of revealed religion is not a thing born with us, nor ordinarily ſupernaturally infuſed into men; but is to be learned as other things are. And if it be to be learned, there muſt be ſome to teach and inſtruct others: And they that will learn muſt be modeſt and humble; and in thoſe things, of which they are no competent judges, they muſt give credit to their teachers, and truſt their skill: for inſtance, every unlearned man is to take it upon the credit of thoſe who are skilful, that the ſcriptures are truly and faithfully tranſlated; and for the underſtanding of obſcure texts of ſcripture, and more difficult points in religion, he is to rely upon thoſe, whoſe

SERM. XXI.

whoſe proper buſineſs and employment it is to apply themſelves to the underſtanding of theſe things. For in theſe caſes every man is not capable of judging himſelf, and therefore he muſt neceſſarily truſt others: and in all other things he ought to be modeſt; and unleſs it be in plain matters, which every man can judge of, he ought rather to diſtruſt himſelf than his teacher.

And this reſpect may be given to a teacher without either ſuppoſing him to be infallible, or making an abſolute reſignation of my judgment to him. A man may be a very able teacher (ſuppoſe of the mathematicks) and fit to have the reſpect which is due to a teacher, tho' he be not infallible in thoſe Sciences: and becauſe infallibility is not neceſſary to ſuch a teacher, it is neither neceſſary nor convenient that I ſhould abſolutely reſign up my judgment to him. For though I have reaſon to credit him, within the compaſs of his art, in things which I do not know, I am not therefore bound to believe him in things plainly contrary to what I and all mankind do certainly know. For example, if upon pretence of his skill in arithmetick, which I am learning of him, he ſhould tell me, that twice two do not make four, but five; though I believed him to be the beſt mathematician in the world, yet I cannot believe him in this thing: nor is there reaſon I ſhould; becauſe I did not come to learn this of him, but knew as much of that before as he or any man elſe could tell me. The caſe is the ſame in matters of religion; in which there are ſome things ſo plain, and lie ſo level to all capacities, that every man is almoſt equally judge of

of them: As I ſhall have occaſion farther to ſhew by and by.

Thirdly, neither doth this liberty of judging exempt men from a due ſubmiſſion and obedience to their teachers and governors. Every man is bound to obey the lawful commands of his governors; and what by publick conſent and authority is determined and eſtabliſhed, ought not to be gainſaid by private perſons, but upon very clear evidence of the the falſhood or unlawfulneſs of it. And this is every man's duty, for the maintaining of order, and out of regard to the peace and unity of the church; which is not to be violated upon every ſcruple and frivolous pretence: and when men are perverſe and diſobedient, authority is judge, and may reſtrain and puniſh them.

Fourthly, nor do I ſo far extend this liberty of judging in religion, as to think every man fit to diſpute the controverſies of religion. A great part of people are ignorant, and of ſo mean a capacity as not to be able to judge of the force of a very good argument, much leſs of the iſſue of a long diſpute; and ſuch perſons ought not to engage in diſputes of religion; but to beg GOD's direction, and to rely upon their teachers; and above all to live up to the plain dictates of natural light, and the clear commands of GOD's word, and this will be their beſt ſecurity. And if the providence of GOD hath placed them under ſuch guides as do ſeduce them into error, their ignorance is invincible, and GOD will not condemn them for it, ſo long as they ſincerely endeavour to do the will of GOD ſo far as they know it. And this being the caſe of many, eſpecially in the

SERM. XXI.

church of Rome, where ignorance is ſo induſtriouſly cheriſhed, I have ſo much charity as to hope well concerning many of them: and ſeeing that church teaches and injoins the people to worſhip images, it is in ſome ſenſe charitably done of them, not to let them know the ſecond commandment, that they may not be guilty of ſinning againſt ſo plain a law.

Having premiſed theſe cautions, I proceed in the

II. Place, to repreſent to you the grounds of this principle of our religion, viz. that we allow private perſons to judge for themſelves in matters of religion.

Firſt, becauſe many things in religion, eſpecially thoſe which are moſt neceſſary to be believed and practiſed, are ſo plain, that every man of ordinary capacity, after competent inſtruction in matters of religion (which is always to be ſuppoſed) can as well judge of them for himſelf, as any man, or company of men in the world can judge for him; becauſe in theſe he hath a plain rule to go by, natural light and clear revelation of ſcripture. And this is no new principle of the proteſtants, but moſt expreſly owned by the ancient fathers. "Whatever "things are neceſſary, are plain," ſaith St. Chryſoſtom. "All things are plainly contained in ſcrip-"ture which concern faith and a good life," ſaith St. Auſtin. And nothing can be more reaſonable, than that thoſe things which are plain to every man ſhould be left to every man's judgment. For every man can judge of what is plain; of evident truth and falſhood, virtue and vice, of doctrines and laws plainly delivered in ſcripture, if we believe any thing to be ſo, which is next to madneſs to deny. I will refer

refer it to no man's judgment upon earth to determine for me, "Whether there be a GOD or not? whether "murder and perjury be ſins?" Whether it be not plain in ſcripture, that "JESUS CHRIST is the "SON of GOD," that "he became man, and died "for us, and roſe again?" ſo that there is no need of a judge in theſe caſes. Nor can I poſſibly believe any man to be ſo abſolutely infallible, as not to call his infallibility into queſtion, if he determines any thing contrary to what is plain and evident to all mankind. For if he ſhould determine "that there is "no GOD," or "that he is not to be worſhipped," or "or that he will not puniſh and reward men," or, which is the caſe that Bellarmine puts, "that "virtue is vice, and vice virtue," he would hereby take away the very foundation of religion; and how can I look upon him any longer as a judge in matters of religion, when there can be no ſuch thing as religion if he have judged and determined right?

Secondly, the ſcripture plainly allows this liberty to particular and private perſons to judge for themſelves. And for this I need go no farther than my text, which bids men "try the ſpirits whether they "be of GOD." I do not think this is ſpoken only to the pope or a general council, but to chriſtians in general: for to theſe the apoſtle writes. Now if St. John had believed that GOD had conſtituted an infallible judge in his church, to whoſe ſentence and determination all chriſtians are bound to ſubmit, he ought in all reaſon to have referred chriſtians to him for the trial of ſpirits, and not to have left it to every man's private judgment to examine and to determine theſe things. But it ſeems St. Paul was like-

SERM XXI.

wiſe of the ſame mind; and though he was guided by an infallible ſpirit, yet he did not expect that men ſhould blindly ſubmit to his doctrine: nay, ſo far is he from that, that he commends the Bereans for that very thing for which, I dare ſay, the church of Rome would have check'd them moſt ſeverely, namely, for ſearching the ſcriptures, to ſee whether thoſe things which the apoſtles delivered were ſo or not: this liberty St. Paul allowed; and though he was inſpired by GOD, yet he treated thoſe whom he taught like men. And indeed, it were a hard caſe that a neceſſity of believing divine revelations, and rejecting impoſtures, ſhould be impoſed upon chriſtians; and yet the liberty of judging, whether a doctrine be from GOD or not, ſhould be taken away from them.

Thirdly, our adverſaries themſelves are forced to grant that which in effect is as much as we contend for. For though they deny a liberty of judging in particular points of religion, yet they are forced to grant men a liberty of judging upon the whole. When they of the church of Rome would perſuade a jew or a heathen, to become a chriſtian; or a heretick (as they are pleaſed to call us) to come over to the communion of their church, and offer arguments to induce them thereunto; they do by this very thing, whether they will or no, make that man judge which is the true church, and the true religion: becauſe it would be ridiculous to perſuade a man to turn to their religion, and to urge him with reaſons to do ſo, and yet to deny him the uſe of his own judgment whether their reaſons be ſufficient to move him to make ſuch a change. Now, as the apoſtle reaſons in another caſe, if men be fit to judge

for

for themſelves in ſo great and important a matter as the choice of their religion, why ſhould they be thought unworthy to judge in leſſer matters? They tell us indeed that a man may uſe his judgment in the choice of his religion; but when he hath once choſen, he is then for ever to reſign up his judgment to their church: but what tolerable reaſon can any man give, why a man ſhould be fit to judge upon the whole, and yet unfit to judge upon particular points? eſpecially if it be conſidered, that no man can make a diſcreet judgment of any religion, before he hath examined the particular doctrines of it, and made a judgment concerning them. Is it credible, that God ſhould give a man judgment in the moſt fundamental and important matter of all, viz. to diſcern the true religion, and the true church, from the falſe; for no other end, but to enable him to chooſe once for all to whom he ſhould reſign and inſlave his judgment for ever? which is juſt as reaſonable as if one ſhould ſay, that God hath given a man eyes for no other end, but to look out once for all, and to pitch upon a diſcreet perſon to lead him about blindfold all the days of his life. I come now to the

SERM. XXI.

III. Thing I propounded, which is, to anſwer the main objection of our adverſaries againſt this principle; and likewiſe to ſhew that there is no ſuch reaſon and neceſſity for an univerſal infallible judge, as they pretend. Now their great objection is this, If every man may judge for himſelf, there will be nothing but confuſion in religion, there will be no end of controverſies: ſo that an univerſal infallible judge is neceſſary, and without this God had not made ſufficient

SERM. XXI.

ficient proviſion for the aſſurance of mens faith, and for the peace and unity of his church: or, as it is expreſſed in the canon law, *aliter Dominus non videretur fuiſſe diſcretus*, "otherwiſe our LORD had "not ſeem'd to be diſcreet." How plauſible ſoever this objection may appear, I do not deſpair, but if men will lay aſide prejudice and impartially conſider things, to make it abundantly evident, that this ground is not ſufficient to found an infallible judge upon. And therefore in anſwer to it, I deſire theſe following particulars may be conſidered.

Firſt, that this which they ſay, rather proves what GOD ſhould have done according to their fancy, than what he hath really and actually done. My text expreſly bids chriſtians to try the ſpirits, which to any man's ſenſe does imply, that they may judge of theſe matters: but the church of Rome ſays they may not; becauſe if this liberty were permitted, GOD had not ordered things wiſely, and for the beſt, for the peace and unity of his church. But, as the apoſtle ſays in another caſe, "What art thou, O man, "that objecteſt againſt GOD?"

Secondly, if this reaſoning be good, we may as well conclude that there is an univerſal infallible judge ſet over the whole world in all temporal matters, to whoſe authority all mankind is bound to ſubmit. Becauſe this is as neceſſary to the peace of the world, as the other is to the peace of the church. And men ſurely are every whit as apt to be obſtinate and perverſe about matters of temporal right, as about matters of faith. But it is evident in fact and experience that there is no ſuch univerſal judge appointed by GOD over the whole world, to decide all caſes

caſes of temporal right; and for want of him the world is fain to ſhift as well as it can. But now a very acute and ſcholaſtical man, that would argue that GOD muſt needs have done whatever he fancies convenient for the world ſhould be done, might by the very ſame way of reaſoning conclude the neceſſity of an univerſal infallible judge in civil matters, as well as in matters of religion: and their *aliter Dominus non videretur fuiſſe diſcretus*, "otherwiſe GOD "had not ſeem'd to be diſcreet," is every whit as cogent and as civil, in the one caſe as the other. SERM. XXI.

Thirdly, there is no need of ſuch a judge, to aſſure men in matters of religion; becauſe men may be ſufficiently certain without him. I hope it may be certain and clear enough, that there is a GOD; and that his providence governs the world; and that there is another life after this, though neither pope nor council had ever declared any thing about theſe matters. And for revealed doctrines, we may be certain enough of all that is neceſſary, if it be true which the fathers tell us, "that all things neceſſary "are plainly revealed in the holy ſcriptures."

Fourthly, an infallible judge, if there were one, is no certain way to end controverſies, and to preſerve the unity of the church; unleſs it were likewiſe infallibly certain, that there is ſuch a judge, and who he is. For 'till men were ſure of both theſe, there would ſtill be a controverſy whether there be an infallible judge, and who he is. And if it be true which they tell us, "that without an infallible judge "controverſies cannot be ended," then a controverſy concerning an infallible judge can never be ended. And there are two controverſies actually on foot about

an

SERM. XXI.

an infallible judge; one, "whether there be an infallible judge, or not?" which is a controverſy between us and the church of Rome: and the other, "who this infallible judge is?" which is a controverſy among themſelves, which could never yet be decided: and yet 'till it be decided, infallibility, if they had it, would be of no uſe to them for the ending of controverſies.

Fifthly, there is no ſuch abſolute need, as is pretended, of determining all controverſies in religion. If men would diveſt themſelves of prejudice and intereſt, as they ought, in matters of religion, the neceſſary things of religion are plain enough, and men would generally agree well enough about them: but if men will ſuffer themſelves to be biaſſed by theſe, they would not hearken to an infallible judge, if there were one; or they would find out ſome way or other to call his infallibility into queſtion. And as for doubtful and leſſer matters in religion, charity, and mutual forbearance among chriſtians, would make the church as peaceable and happy, as perhaps it was ever deſign'd to be in this world, without abſolute unity in opinion.

Sixthly and laſtly, whatever may be the inconveniences of mens judging for themſelves in religion, yet, taking this principle with the cautions I have given, I doubt not to make it appear, that the inconveniences are far the leaſt on that ſide. The preſent condition of humane nature doth not admit of any conſtitution of things, whether in religion, or civil matters, which is free from all kind of exception and inconvenience: that is the beſt ſtate of things which is liable to the leaſt and feweſt. If

men

men be modeſt, and humble, and willing to learn, SERM. XXI.
God hath done that which is ſufficient for the aſſurance of our faith, and for the peace of his church, without an infallible judge: and if men will not be ſo, I cannot tell what would be ſufficient. I am ſure there were hereſies and ſchiſms in the apoſtles times, when thoſe who governed the church were certainly guided by an infallible ſpirit. God hath appointed guides and teachers for us in matters of religion, and if we will be contented to be inſtructed by them in thoſe neceſſary articles and duties of religion, which are plainly contained in ſcripture; and to be counſelled and directed by them in things that are more doubtful and difficult, I do not ſee why we might not do well enough without any infallible judge or guide.

But ſtill it will be ſaid, "who ſhall judge what "things are plain, and what doubtful?" The anſwer to this, in my opinion, is not difficult. For if there be any thing plain in religion, every man that hath been duly inſtructed in the principles of religion can judge of it, or elſe it is not plain. But there are ſome things in religion ſo very plain, that no guide or judge can in reaſon claim that authority over men, as to oblige them to believe or do the contrary; no, though he pretend to infallibility; no, though he were an apoſtle, though he were an angel from heaven. St. Paul puts the caſe ſo high, Gal. i. 8. "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any "other goſpel unto you, than what you have receiv-"ed, let him be accurſed:" which plainly ſuppoſeth that chriſtians may and can judge when doctrines are contrary to the goſpel. What? not be-

I.

SERM. XXI.

lieve an apoſtle, nor an angel from heaven, if he ſhould teach any thing evidently contrary to the plain doctrine of the goſpel? If he ſhould determine virtue to be vice, and vice to be virtue? no; not an apoſtle, nor an angel; becauſe ſuch a doctrine as this would confound and overturn all things in religion. And yet Bellarmine puts this very caſe, and ſays, if the pope ſhould ſo determine, we were bound to believe him, unleſs we would ſin againſt conſcience.

I will conclude this diſcourſe by putting a very plain and familiar caſe; by which it will appear what credit and authority is fit to be given to a guide, and what not. Suppoſe I came a ſtranger into England, and landing at Dover took a guide there to conduct me in my way to York, which I knew before by the map to lie north of Dover: having committed myſelf to him, if he lead me for two or three days together out of any plain road, and many times over hedge and ditch, I cannot but think it ſtrange, that in a civil and well-inhabited country there ſhould be no highways from one part of it to another: yet thus far I ſubmit to him, though not without ſome regret and impatience. But then if after this, for two or three days more he lead me directly ſouth, and with my face full upon the ſun at noonday, and at laſt bring me back again to Dover Peer, and ſtill bids me follow him; then certainly no modeſty does oblige a man not to diſpute with his guide, and to tell him ſurely that can be no way, becauſe it is ſea. Now though he ſet never ſo bold a face upon the matter, and tell me with all the gravity and authority in the world, that it is not the ſea but dry land under the ſpecies and appearance of water;

ter; and that whatever my eyes tell me, having once committed myſelf to his guidance, I muſt not truſt my own ſenſes in the caſe; it being one of the moſt dangerous ſorts of infidelity for a man to believe his own eyes rather than his faithful and infallible guide: all this moves me not; but I begin to expoſtulate roundly with him, and to let him underſtand that if I muſt not believe what I ſee, he is like to be of no farther uſe to me; becauſe I ſhall not be able, at this rate, to know whether I have a guide, and whether I follow him or not. In ſhort, I tell him plainly, that when I took him for my guide, I did not take him to tell me the difference between north and ſouth, between a hedge and a highway, between ſea and dry land; all this I knew before, as well as he or any man elſe could tell me; but I took him to conduct and direct me the neareſt way to York. And therefore after all his impertinent talk, after all his motives of credibility to perſuade me to believe him, and all his confident ſayings, which he gravely calls demonſtrations, I ſtand ſtifly upon the ſhore, and leave my learned and reverend guide to take his own courſe, and to diſpoſe of himſelf as he pleaſeth; but firmly reſolve not to follow him. And is any man to be blamed that breaks with his guide upon theſe Terms?

SERM. XXI.

And this is truly the caſe, when a man commits himſelf to the guidance of any perſon or church: if by virtue of this authority they will needs perſuade me out of my ſenſes, and not to believe what I ſee, but what they ſay; that virtue is vice, and vice virtue, if they declare them to be ſo: and that, becauſe they ſay they are infallible, I am to receive all their

SERM. XXI.

dictates for oracles, tho' never ſo evidently falſe and abſurd in the judgment of all mankind: in this caſe there is no way to be rid of theſe unreaſonable people, but to deſire of them, ſince one kindneſs deſerves another, and all contradictions are alike eaſy to be believed, that they would be pleaſed to believe that infidelity is faith, and that when I abſolutely renounce their authority, I do yield a moſt perfect ſubmiſſion and obedience to it.

Upon the whole matter, all the revelations of God, as well as the laws of men, go upon this preſumption, that men are not ſtark fools; but that they will conſider their intereſt, and have ſome regard to the great concernment of their eternal ſalvation. And this is as much to ſecure men from miſtake in matters of belief, as God hath afforded to keep men from ſin in matters of practice. He hath made no effectual and infallible proviſion that men ſhall not ſin; and yet it would puzzle any man to give a good reaſon, why God ſhould take more care to ſecure men againſt errors in belief, than againſt ſin and wickedneſs in their lives.

I ſhall now only draw three or four Inferences from this diſcourſe which I have made, and ſo conclude.

1. That it is every man's duty, who hath ability and capacity for it, to endeavour to underſtand the grounds of his religion. For to try doctrines, is to inquire into the grounds and reaſons of them; which the better any man underſtands, the more firmly he will be eſtabliſhed in the truth, and be the more reſolute in the day of trial, and the better able to withſtand the arts and aſſaults of cunning adverſaries,

ries, and the fierce ſtorms of perſecution. And on the contrary, that man will ſoon be moved from his ſtedfaſtneſs who never examined the grounds and reaſons of his belief. When it comes to the trial, he that hath but little to ſay for his religion, will probably neither do nor ſuffer much for it.

2. That all doctrines are vehemently to be ſuſpected which decline trial, and are ſo loth to be brought into the light; which will not endure a fair examination, but magiſterially require an implicite faith: whereas truth is bold and full of courage, and loves to appear openly; and is ſo ſecure and confident of her own ſtrength as to offer herſelf to the ſevereſt trial and examination. But to deny all liberty of enquiry and judgment in matters of religion, is the greateſt injury and diſparagement to truth that can be, and a tacit acknowledgment that ſhe lies under ſome diſadvantage, and that there is leſs to be ſaid for her than for error.

I have often wonder'd why the people in the church of Rome do not ſuſpect their teachers and guides to have ſome ill deſign upon them, when they do ſo induſtriouſly debar them of the means of knowledge, and are ſo very loth to let them underſtand what it is that we have to ſay againſt their religion. For can any thing in the world be more ſuſpicious, than to perſuade men to put out their eyes, upon promiſe that they will help them to a much better and more faithful guide? If any church, any profeſſion of men, be unwilling their doctrines ſhould be expoſed to trial, it is a certain ſign they know ſomething by them that is faulty, and which will not endure the light. This is the account which

our

SERM. XXI.

our SAVIOUR gives us in a like caſe, it was "be-
"cauſe mens deeds were evil, that they loved dark-
"neſs rather than light." For "every one that doth
"evil hateth the light, neither cometh he to the
"light, leſt his deeds ſhould be reproved: but he
"that doth the truth cometh to the light, that his
"deeds may be made manifeſt that they are wrought
"in GOD."

3. Since reaſon and chriſtianity allow this liberty to private perſons to judge for themſelves in matters of religion, we ſhould uſe this privilege with much modeſty and humility, with great ſubmiſſion and deference to our ſpiritual rulers and guides, whom GOD hath appointed in his church. And there is very great need of this caution, ſince by experience we find this liberty ſo much abuſed by many to the nouriſhing of pride and ſelf-conceit, of diviſion and faction; and thoſe who are leaſt able to judge, to be frequently the moſt forward and confident, the moſt peremptory and perverſe: and inſtead of demeaning themſelves with the ſubmiſſion of learners, to aſſume to themſelves the authority of judges, even in the moſt doubtful and diſputable matters.

The tyranny of the Roman church over the minds and conſciences of men, is not to be juſtified upon any account; but nothing puts ſo plauſible a colour upon it, as the ill uſe that is too frequently made of this natural privilege of mens judging for themſelves in a matter of ſo infinite concernment, as that of their eternal happineſs. But then it is to be conſider'd, that the proper remedy in this caſe, is not to deprive men of this privilege, but to uſe the beſt means to prevent the abuſe of it. For though the inconve-

niences

niences ariſing from the ill uſe of it may be very great, yet the miſchief on the other hand is intolerable. Religion itſelf is liable to be abuſed to very bad purpoſes, and frequently is ſo; but it is not therefore beſt that there ſhould be no religion: and yet this objection, if it be of any force and be purſued home, is every whit as ſtrong againſt religion itſelf, as againſt mens liberty of judging in matters of religion. Nay I add further, that no man can judiciouſly embrace the true religion, unleſs he be permitted to judge, whether that which he embraces be the true religion or not. SERM. XXI.

4. When upon due trial and examination we are well ſettled and eſtabliſh'd in our religion, "let us "hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wa-"vering;" and not be "like children, toſſed to and "fro, and carried about with every wind of doc-"trine, through the ſleight of men, and the cun-"ning craftineſs of thoſe who lie in wait to deceive." And above all, let us reſolve to live according to the excellent rules and precepts of our holy religion; let us heartily obey that doctrine which we profeſs to believe. We, who enjoy the proteſtant religion, have all the means and advantages of underſtanding the will of God, free liberty and full ſcope of inquiring into it; and informing ourſelves concerning it: we have all the opportunities we can wiſh of coming to the knowledge of our duty: the oracles of God lie open to us, and his law is continually before our eyes; "his word is nigh unto us in our "mouths, and in our hearts;" (that is, we may read it and meditate upon it) "that we may "do it:" the key of knowledge is put into our hands,

SERM. XXI.

hands, ſo that if we do not enter into the kingdom of heaven, it is we ourſelves that ſhut ourſelves out. And where there is nothing to hinder us from the knowledge of our duty, there certainly nothing can excuſe us from the practice of it. For the end of all knowledge is to direct men in their duty, and effectually to engage them to the performance of it: the great buſineſs of religion is, to make men truly good, and to teach them to live well. And, if religion have not this effect, it matters not of what church any man liſts and enters himſelf; for moſt certainly, a bad man can be ſaved in none. Tho' a man know the right way to heaven never ſo well, and be entred into it, yet if he will not walk therein, he ſhall never come thither: nay, it will be an aggravation of this man's unhappineſs, that he was loſt in the way to heaven, and periſh'd in the very road to ſalvation. But if we will in good earneſt apply ourſelves to the practice of religion, and the obedience of GOD's holy laws, his grace will never be wanting to us to ſo good a purpoſe.

I have not time to recommend Religion to you at large, with all its advantages. I will compriſe what I have to ſay in a few words, and mind them at your peril. Let that which is our great concernment be our great care, "to know the truth and to "do it, to fear GOD and keep his commandments." Conſidering the reaſonableneſs and the reward of piety and virtue, nothing can be wiſer; conſidering the mighty aſſiſtance of GOD's grace, which he is ready to afford us, and the unſpeakable ſatisfaction and delight which is to be had in the doing of our duty, nothing can be eaſier: nothing will give us that pleaſure,

ſure, while we live; nothing can miniſter that true and ſolid comfort to us, when we come to die: there is probably no ſuch way for a man to be happy in this world; to be ſure, there is no way but this to eſcape the intolerable and endleſs miſeries of another world. SERM. XXI.

" Now GOD grant that we may all know and do " in this our day, the things that belong to our " peace, for his mercies ſake in JESUS CHRIST: " to whom with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST, " be all honour and glory now and for ever, Amen.

A

SERMON

Preached at the

ASSIZES

HELD AT

KINGSTON upon *THAMES*,

JULY 21, 1681.

To the right worſhipful, and my honoured friend,

JOSEPH REEVE, Eſq;

High-Sheriff of the County of

SURREY.

SIR,

WHEN I had perform'd the ſervice which you were pleaſed to call me to in the preaching of this ſermon, I had no thoughts of making it more publick; and yet in this alſo I was the more eaſily induced to comply with your deſire, becauſe of the ſuitableneſs of the argument to the age in which we live; wherein as men have run into the wildeſt extremities in other things, ſo particularly in the matter of oaths; ſome

ſome making conſcience of taking any oaths at all, and too many none at all of breaking them.

To convince the great miſtake of the one extreme, and to check the growing evil and miſchief of the other, is the chief deſign of this diſcourſe. To which I ſhall be very glad if, by GOD's *bleſſing, it may prove any ways ſerviceable. I am,*

SIR,

Your very faithful and

humble Servant,

JO. TILLOTSON.

SERMON XXII.

The lawfulneſs and obligation of oaths.

HEB. vi. 16.

An oath for confirmation is to them an end of all ſtrife.

SERM. XXII.

THE neceſſity of religion to the ſupport of humane ſociety, in nothing appears more evidently than in this, that the obligation of an oath, which is ſo neceſſary for the maintenance of peace and juſtice among men, depends wholly upon the ſenſe and belief of a deity. For no reaſon can be imagined why any man that doth not believe a GOD, ſhould make the leaſt conſcience of an oath, which is nothing elſe but a ſolemn appeal to GOD as a witneſs of the truth of what we ſay. So that whoever promotes atheiſm and infidelity, doth the moſt deſtructive thing imaginable to humane ſociety, becauſe he takes away the reverence and obligation of oaths: and whenever that is generally caſt off, humane ſociety muſt disband, and all things run into diſorder. The juſt ſenſe whereof made David cry out to GOD with ſo much earneſtneſs, as if the world had been cracking, and the frame of it ready to break in pieces, Pſal. xii. "Help, LORD, for the righteous man ceaſeth, and "the faithful fail from among the children of men:" intimating, that when faith fails from among men, nothing but a particular and immediate interpoſition of

SERM. XXII. of the divine providence can preſerve the world from falling into confuſion. And our bleſſed SAVIOUR gives this as a ſign of the end of the world, and the approaching diſſolution of all things, when faith and truth ſhall hardly be found among men, Luke xviii. 8. "When the SON of man comes, ſhall he find "faith on the earth?" This ſtate of things doth loudly call for his coming to deſtroy the world, which is even ready to diſſolve and fall in pieces of it ſelf, when theſe bands and pillars of humane ſociety do break and fail. And ſurely never in any age was this ſign of the coming of the SON of man more glaring and terrible than in this degenerate age wherein we live, when almoſt all ſorts of men ſeem to have broke looſe from all obligations to faith and truth.

And therefore I do not know any argument more proper and uſeful to be treated of upon this occaſion than of the nature and obligation of an oath, which is the utmoſt ſecurity that one man can give to another of the truth of what he ſays; the ſtrongeſt tie of fidelity, the ſureſt ground of judicial proceedings, and the moſt firm and ſacred bond that can be laid upon all that are concerned in the adminiſtration of publick juſtice; upon judge, and jury, and witneſſes.

And for this reaſon I have pitched upon theſe words: in which the apoſtle declares to us the great uſe and neceſſity of oaths among men; "an oath "for confirmation is to them an end of all ſtrife". He had ſaid before, that for our greater aſſurance and comfort GOD hath confirmed his promiſes to us by an oath; condeſcending herein to deal with us after

after the manner of men, who when they would give credit to a doubtful matter, confirm what they ſay by an oath. And generally when any doubt or controverſy ariſeth between parties concerning a matter of fact, one ſide affirming and the other denying, an end is put to this conteſt by an oath; "An oath for "confirmation being to them an end of all ſtrife:" An oath for confirmation, εἰς βεβαίωσιν, for the greater aſſurance and eſtabliſhment of a thing: not that an oath is always a certain and infallible deciſion of things according to truth and right, but that this is the utmoſt credit that we can give to any thing, and the laſt effort of truth and confidence among men: after this we can go no farther, for if the religion of an oath will not oblige men to ſpeak truth, nothing will. This is the utmoſt ſecurity that men can give, and muſt therefore be the final deciſion of all conteſts; "An oath for confir-"mation is to them an end of all ſtrife". SERM. XXII.

Now from this aſſertion of the apoſtle concerning the great uſe and end of Oaths among men, I ſhall take occaſion,

1. To conſider the nature of an oath, and the kinds of it.

2. To ſhew the great uſe and even neceſſity of oaths, in many caſes.

3. To vindicate the lawfulneſs of them where they are neceſſary.

4. To ſhew the ſacred obligation of an oath.

I ſhall be as brief in theſe as the juſt handling of them will bear.

I. For the nature of an oath, and the kinds of it. An oath is an invocation of God, or an appeal to

2.

SERM. XXII.

him as a witneſs of the truth of what we ſay. So that an oath is a ſacred thing, as being an act of religion and an invocation of the name of GOD: and this, whether the name of GOD be expreſly mentioned in it or not. If a man only ſay, I ſwear, or I take my oath, that a thing is, or is not, ſo or ſo; or that I will, or will not, do ſuch a thing: or if a man anſwer upon his oath, being adjured and required ſo to do: or if a man ſwear by heaven, or by earth, or by any other thing that hath relation to GOD; in all theſe caſes a man doth virtually call GOD to witneſs; and in ſo doing he doth by conſequence invoke him as a judge and an avenger, in caſe what he ſwears be not true: and if this be expreſt, the oath is a formal imprecation; but whether it be, or not, a curſe upon our ſelves is always implied in caſe of perjury.

There are two ſorts of oaths, aſſertory, and promiſſory. An aſſertory oath is when a man affirms or denies upon oath a matter of fact, paſt, or preſent: when he ſwears that a thing was, or is ſo, or not ſo. A promiſſory oath is a promiſe confirmed by an oath, which always reſpects ſomething that is future: and if the promiſe be made directly and immediately to GOD, then it is called a vow; if to men, an oath. I proceed to the

II. Thing, which is to ſhew the great uſe and even neceſſity of oaths, in many caſes; which is ſo great, that humane ſociety can very hardly, if at all, ſubſiſt long without them. Government would many times be very inſecure, and for the faithful diſcharge of offices of great truſt, in which the welfare of the publick is nearly concerned, it is not poſſible

poſſible to find any ſecurity equal to that of an oath; becauſe the obligation of that reacheth to the moſt ſecret and hidden practices of men, and takes hold of them in many caſes where the penalty of no humane law can have any awe or force upon them: and eſpecially, it is (as the civil law expreſſeth it) *maximum expediendarum litium remedium*, the beſt means of ending controverſies. And where mens eſtates or lives are concerned, no evidence but what is aſſured by an oath will be thought ſufficient to decide the matter, ſo as to give full and general ſatisfaction to mankind. For in matters of ſo great concernment, when men have all the aſſurance that can be had, and not till then, they are contented to ſit down, and reſt ſatisfied with it. And among all nations an oath hath always been thought the only peremptory and ſatisfactory way of deciding ſuch controverſies.

III. The third thing I propoſed was, to vindicate the lawfulneſs of oaths, where they are neceſſary. And it is a very ſtrong inducement to believe the lawfulneſs of them, that the unavoidable condition of humane affairs hath made them ſo neceſſary. The apoſtle takes it for granted, that an oath is not only of great uſe in humane affairs, but in many caſes of great neceſſity, to confirm a doubtful thing, and to put an end to controverſies which cannot otherwiſe be decided to the ſatisfaction of the Parties contending; "An oath for confirmation is to them "an end of all ſtrife." And indeed it is hardly imaginable that GOD ſhould not have left that lawful, which is ſo evidently neceſſary to the peace and ſecurity of mankind.

SERM. XXII.

But becauſe there is a ſect, ſprung up in our memory, which hath called in queſtion the lawfulneſs of all oaths, to the great miſchief and diſturbance of humane ſociety, I ſhall endeavour to ſearch this mattter to the bottom, and to manifeſt how unreaſonable and groundleſs this opinion is. And to this end, I ſhall,

Firſt, prove the lawfulneſs of oaths from the authority of this text, and from the reaſons plainly contained, or ſtrongly implied in it.

Secondly, I ſhall ſhew the weakneſs and inſufficiency of the grounds of the contrary opinion; whether from reaſon, or from ſcripture, which laſt they principally rely upon; and if it could be made out from thence would determine the caſe.

1. I ſhall prove the lawfulneſs of oaths from the authority of this text, and the reaſons plainly contained, or ſtrongly implied in it. Becauſe the apoſtle doth not only ſpeak of the uſe of oaths among men without any manner of cenſure and reproof, but as a commendable cuſtom and practice, and in many caſes neceſſary for the confirmation of doubtful matters, and in order to the final deciſion of controverſies and differences among men. For,

Firſt, he ſpeaks of it as the general practice of mankind, to confirm things by an oath in order to the ending of differences. And indeed there is nothing that hath more univerſally obtained in all ages and nations of the world; than which there is not a more certain indication that a thing is agreeable to the law of nature and the beſt reaſon of mankind. And that this was no degenerate practice of mankind, like that of idolatry, is from hence evident; that

SERM. XXII.

that when GOD ſeparated a people to himſelf, it was practiſed among them, by the holy patriarchs, Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob; and was afterwards not only allowed, but in many caſes commanded by the law of Moſes; which, had it been a thing evil in it ſelf, and forbidden by the law of nature, would not have been done.

Secondly, another undeniable argument from the text of the lawfulneſs of oaths is, that GOD himſelf, in condeſcenſion to the cuſtom of men who uſe to confirm and give credit to what they ſay by an oath, is repreſented by the apoſtle as confirming his promiſe to us by an oath, ver. 13. "When GOD "made the promiſe to Abraham, becauſe he could "ſwear by none greater, he ſwears by himſelf. For "men verily ſwear by the greater; and an oath for "confirmation is to them an end of all ſtrife. "Wherein GOD, willing more abundantly to ſhew "unto the heirs of promiſe the immutability of his "counſel, confirmed it by an oath": which he certainly would not have done, had an oath been unlawful in it ſelf. For that had been to comply with men in an evil practice, and by his own example to give countenance to it in the higheſt manner: but though GOD condeſcend to repreſent himſelf to us after the manner of men, he never does it in any thing that is in its own nature evil and ſinful.

Thirdly, from the great uſefulneſs of oaths in humane affairs, to give credit and confirmation to our word, and to put an end to conteſtations. Now that which ſerves to ſuch excellent purpoſes, and is ſo convenient for humane ſociety, and for mutual

ſecurity

SERM. XXII.

ſecurity and confidence among men, ought not eaſily to be preſumed unlawful, 'till it be plainly proved to be ſo. And if we conſider the nature of an oath, and every thing belonging to it, there is nothing that hath the leaſt appearance of evil in it. There is ſurely no evil in it, as it is an act of religion; nor as it is an appeal to GOD as a witneſs and avenger in caſe we ſwear falſly; nor as it is a confirmation of a doubtful matter; nor as it puts an end to ſtrife and controverſy. And theſe are all the eſſential ingredients of an oath, and the ends of it; and they are all ſo good, that they rather commend it, than give the leaſt colour of ground to condemn it. I proceed in the

Second place, to ſhew the weakneſs and inſufficiency of the grounds of the contrary opinion; whether from reaſon or from ſcripture.

Firſt, from reaſon. They ſay the neceſſity of an oath is occaſioned by the want of truth and fidelity among men: And that every man ought to demean himſelf with that faithfulneſs and integrity as may give credit and confirmation to his word; and then oaths will be needleſs. This pretence will be fully anſwered if we conſider theſe two things.

1. That in matters of great importance no other obligation, beſides that of an oath, hath been thought ſufficient amongſt the beſt and wiſeſt of men, to aſſert their fidelity to one another. "Even the beſt of men "(to uſe the words of a great author) have not "truſted the beſt men without it." As we ſee in very remarkable inſtances, where oaths have paſſed between thoſe who might be thought to have the greateſt confidence in one another: as between Abraham

ham and his old faithful ſervant Eliezer, concerning the choice of a wife for his ſon: between father and ſon, Jacob and Joſeph, concerning the burial of his father in the land of Canaan: between two of the deareſt and moſt intimate friends, David and Jonathan, to aſſure their friendſhip to one another; and it had its effect long after Jonathan's death, in the ſaving of Mephiboſheth, when reaſon of ſtate and the ſecurity of his throne ſeem'd to move David ſtrongly to the contrary; for it is expreſly ſaid, 2 Sam. xxi. 7. that "David ſpared Mephiboſheth, Jonathan's "ſon, becauſe of the oath of the LORD that was "between them;" implying, that had it not been for his oath, other conſiderations might probably have prevail'd with him to have permitted him to have been cut off with the reſt of Saul's Children. SERM. XXII.

2. This reaſon, which is alledged againſt oaths among men, is much ſtronger againſt GOD's confirming his promiſes to us by an oath. For he, who is truth itſelf, is ſurely of all other moſt to be credited upon his bare word, and his oath needleſs to give confirmation to it; and yet he condeſcends to add his oath to his word; and therefore that reaſon is evidently of no force.

Secondly, from ſcripture. Our SAVIOUR ſeems altogether to forbid ſwearing in any caſe, Matth. v. 33, 34. "Ye have heard that it hath been ſaid to "them of old time, thou ſhalt not forſwear thyſelf: "but I ſay unto you, ſwear not at all; neither by "heaven, &c. but let your communication be yea, "yea, and nay, nay; for whatſoever is more than "theſe, cometh of evil." And this law St. James recites, chap. v. ver. 12. as that which chriſtians ought

SERM. XXII.

ought to have a particular and principal regard to; "above all things, my brethren, ſwear not:" and he makes the breach of this law a damning ſin, "leſt ye fall into condemnation." But the authority of our SAVIOUR alone is ſufficient, and therefore I ſhall only conſider that text.

And, becauſe here lies the main ſtrength of this opinion of the unlawfulneſs of oaths, it is very fit that this text be fully conſider'd; and that it be made very evident, that it was not our SAVIOUR's meaning by this prohibition wholly to forbid the uſe of oaths.

But before I enter upon this matter, I will readily grant, that there is ſcarce any error whatſoever that hath a more plauſible colour from ſcripture, than this; which makes the caſe of thoſe who are ſeduced into it the more pitiable: but then it ought to be conſider'd, how much this doctrine of the unlawfulneſs of oaths reflects upon the chriſtian religion: ſince it is ſo evidently prejudicial both to humane ſociety in general, and particularly to thoſe perſons that entertain it: neither of which ought raſhly to be ſuppoſed and taken for granted, concerning any law delivered by our SAVIOUR: becauſe upon theſe terms it will be very hard for us to vindicate the divine wiſdom of our SAVIOUR's doctrine, and the reaſonableneſs of the chriſtian religion. Of the inconvenience of this Doctrine to humane ſociety, I have ſpoken already. But beſides this, it is very prejudicial to them that hold it. It renders them ſuſpected to government, and in many caſes incapable of the common benefits of juſtice and other privileges of humane ſociety, and expoſeth them to great

SERM. XXII.

great penalties as the conſtitution of all laws and governments at preſent is, and it is not eaſy to imagine how they ſhould be otherwiſe. And, which is very conſiderable in this matter, it ſets thoſe who refuſe oaths upon very unequal terms with the reſt of mankind, if where the eſtates and lives of men are equally concern'd, their bare teſtimonies ſhall be admitted without an oath, and others ſhall be obliged to ſpeak upon oath: nothing being more certain in experience, than that many men will lye for their intereſt when they will not be perjured, GOD having planted in the natural conſciences of men a ſecret dread of perjury above moſt other ſins. And this inconvenience is ſo great, as to render thoſe who refuſe oaths in all caſes almoſt intolerable to humane ſociety. I ſpeak not this either to bring them into trouble, or to perſuade them to meaſure truth by their intereſt: but on the other hand I muſt needs ſay, that it is no argument either of a wiſe or good man to take up any opinion, eſpecially ſuch a one as is greatly to his prejudice, upon ſlight grounds. And this very conſideration, that it is ſo much to their inconvenience, may juſtly move them to be very careful in the examination of it.

This being premis'd, I come now to explain this prohibition of our SAVIOUR; and to this purpoſe, I deſire theſe three things may be well conſider'd.

Firſt, that ſeveral circumſtances of theſe words of our SAVIOUR do manifeſtly ſhew that they ought to be interpreted in a limited ſenſe, as only forbidding ſwearing in common converſation; needleſs and heedleſs oaths (as one expreſſeth it) and in general all voluntary ſwearing, unleſs upon ſome great and

2.

SERM. XXII.

weighty cauſe, in which the glory of GOD and the good of the ſouls of men is concerned. For that in ſuch caſes a voluntary oath may be lawful, I am induced to believe from the example of St. Paul, who uſeth it more than once upon ſuch occaſions; of which I ſhall hereafter give particular Inſtances.

And this was the ſenſe of wiſe men among the heathen, that men ſhould not ſwear but upon neceſſity and great occaſion. Thus Euſebius, the philoſopher in Stobæus, counſels men. "Some (ſays he) "adviſe men to be careful to ſwear the truth; but I "adviſe principally that men do not eaſily ſwear at "all," that is, not upon any ſlight but only upon weighty occaſions: to the ſame purpoſe Epictetus, "Shun oaths wholly, if it be poſſible; if not, how-"ever as much as thou canſt:" and ſo likewiſe Simplicius in his comment upon him, "We ought "wholly to ſhun ſwearing, except upon occaſions of "great neceſſity." And Quintilian among the Romans, *In totum jurare, niſi ubi neceſſe eſt, gravi viro parum convenit*; "to ſwear at all, except where it is "neceſſary, does not well ſuit with a wiſe man."

And that this prohibition of our SAVIOUR's ought to be underſtood of oaths in ordinary converſation, appears from the oppoſition which our SAVIOUR makes, "Swear not at all; but let your "communication be yea, yea;" that is, in your ordinary commerce and affairs do not interpoſe oaths, but ſay and do. And this is very much confirmed, in that our SAVIOUR does not under this general prohibition inſtance in ſuch oaths as are expreſly by the name of GOD: the reaſon whereof is this; the

jews

jews thought it unlawful in ordinary communication to ſwear expreſly by the name of GOD, but lawful to ſwear by the creatures, as by heaven and earth, &c. So that our SAVIOUR's meaning is as if he had ſaid, "You think you may ſwear in common "converſation, provided you do not ſwear by the "name of GOD; but I ſay unto you, let your com- "munication be without oaths of any kind: you "ſhall not ſo much as ſwear by heaven or by earth, "becauſe GOD is virtually invoked in every oath." And unleſs we ſuppoſe this to be our SAVIOUR's meaning, I do not ſee what good reaſon can be given why our SAVIOUR ſhould only forbid them to ſwear by the creatures, and not much rather by the name of GOD; ſuch oaths being ſurely of all others moſt to be avoided, as being the moſt direct abuſe and profanation of the name of GOD. SERM. XXII.

Secondly, it is very conſiderable to the explaining of this prohibition, that there are the like general expreſſions in other jewiſh authors concerning this very matter, which yet muſt of neceſſity be thus limited. Maimonides, from the ancient rabbies, gives this rule, that "it is beſt not to ſwear at all." And Philo uſeth almoſt the ſame words. And Rabbi Jonathan comes very near our SAVIOUR's expreſſion, when he ſays, "the juſt man will not ſwear at all; "not ſo much as by the common names of GOD, "nor by his attributes, nor by his works, as by "heaven, or the angels, or by the law." Now it is not imaginable, that theſe learned jews ſhould condemn oaths in all caſes, when the law of Moſes did in many caſes expreſly require them. And therefore they are to be underſtood of voluntary oaths in or-

SERM. XXII.

dinary converſation. And that the jews meant this by not ſwearing at all, ſeems to be very plain from a paſſage in Joſephus, who ſays that the ſect of the Eſſenes forbad their diſciples to ſwear at all; and yet he tells us at the ſame time, that they who were admitted into that ſect took an oath to obſerve the laws and rules of it. So that they who forbad to ſwear at all, allowed of oaths impoſed by the authority of ſuperiors.

Thirdly, which will peremptorily decide this matter, this prohibition of our SAVIOUR's cannot be underſtood to forbid all oaths, without a plain contradiction to the undoubted practice of the primitive chriſtians, and of the apoſtles, and even of our LORD himſelf. Origen and Tertullian tell us, that the chriſtians refuſed to ſwear by the emperor's genius; not becauſe it was an oath, but becauſe they thought it to be idolatrous; but the ſame Tertullian ſays, that the chriſtians were willing to ſwear *per ſalutem imperatoris*, "by the health and ſafety of the "emperor." Athanaſius being accuſed to Conſtantius, purged himſelf by oath, and deſired that his accuſer might be put to his oath *ſub atteſtatione veritatis*, "by calling the truth to witneſs; by which form "(ſays he) we chriſtians are wont to ſwear." But which is more than this, St. Paul, upon weighty occaſions, does ſeveral times in his epiſtles call GOD to witneſs for the truth of what he ſays; which is the very formality of an oath. "God is my witneſs," Rom. i. 9. "As GOD is true, our word was not "yea and nay," 2 Cor. i. 18. and ver. 23. "I call "GOD for a record upon my ſoul. Before GOD I "lye not," Gal. i. 20. "GOD is my record,"

Phil.

Phil. i. 8. " GOD is my witneſs," 1 Theſ. ii. 5. SERM. XXII.
Theſe are all unqueſtionable oaths; which we cannot imagine St. Paul would have uſed, had they been directly contrary to our SAVIOUR's law. And whereas ſome defend this upon account of his extraordinary inſpiration, I cannot poſſibly ſee how this mends the matter. For certainly it is very inconvenient to ſay, that they who were to teach the precepts of CHRIST to others, did themſelves break them by inſpiration.

But I go yet further, and ſhall urge an example beyond all exception.

Our SAVIOUR himſelf (who ſurely would not be the firſt example of breaking his own laws) did not refuſe to anſwer upon oath, being called thereto at his trial. So we find Matth. xxvi. 63. " The high " prieſt ſaid unto him, I adjure thee by the living " GOD, that thou tell us whether thou be the " CHRIST the SON of GOD;" that is, he required him to anſwer this queſtion upon oath. For among the jews, the form of giving an oath to witneſſes and others was not by tendring a formal oath to them, as the cuſtom is among us, but by adjuring them, that is, requiring them to anſwer upon oath: as is plain from Levit. v. 1. " If a man hear the " voice of ſwearing, and is a witneſs, whether he hath " ſeen or known of ſuch a thing, if he do not utter " it, then he ſhall bear his iniquity." If he have heard the voice of ſwearing, that is, if being adjured or demanded to anſwer upon oath concerning what he hath ſeen or heard, he do not utter the truth, he is perjured. Now to this adjuration of the high prieſt our SAVIOUR anſwered, " thou haſt ſaid:" which

SERM. XXII. which words are not an avoiding to anſwer (as ſome have thought) but a direct anſwer, as if he had ſaid, "it is as thou ſayeſt, it is even ſo, I am the SON of "GOD." For upon this anſwer the high prieſt ſaid, "he hath ſpoken blaſphemy." But to put the matter beyond all doubt, St. Mark tells us, Mark xiv. 61. that he being asked by the high prieſt, "Art thou "the CHRIST, the SON of the BLESSED? he an-"ſwered, I am." So that unleſs we will interpret our SAVIOUR's doctrine contrary to his own practice, we cannot underſtand him to forbid all oaths, and conſequently they are not unlawful.

I have been the longer upon this, that I might give clear ſatisfaction in this matter to thoſe that are willing to receive it.

As for the ceremonies in uſe among us in the taking of oaths, it is no juſt exception againſt them, that they are not found in ſcripture. For this was always matter of liberty; and ſeveral nations have uſed ſeveral rites and ceremonies in their oaths. It was the cuſtom of the Grecians, to ſwear laying their hands upon the altar, *quod ſanctiſſimum jusjurandum eſt habitum*, (ſaith A. Gellius) "which was looked upon as "the moſt ſacred form of ſwearing." The Romans were wont *Jovem lapidem jurare*; that is, he that ſwore by Jupiter held a flint ſtone in his hand, and flung it violently from him with theſe words, *Si ſciens fallo, ita me Jupiter bonis omnibus ejiciat, ut ego hunc lapidem:* "If I knowingly falſify, GOD ſo "throw me out of all my poſſeſſions as I do this "ſtone."

In ſcripture there are two ceremonies mentioned of ſwearing. One, of putting the hand under the thigh

thigh of him to whom the oath was made. Thus Eliezer ſwore to Abraham, Gen. xxiv. and Joſeph to Jacob, Gen. xlvii. The other was by lifting up the hand to heaven: Thus Abraham expreſſeth the manner of an oath, Gen. xiv. 22. "I have lift up "my hand to the moſt high GOD." And thus GOD, condeſcending to the manner of men, expreſſeth himſelf, Deut. xxxii. 40. "If I lift up my hand "to heaven, and ſwear." In alluſion to this cuſtom the pſalmiſt deſcribes the perjured perſon, Pſal cxliv. 8. "whoſe mouth ſpeaketh vanity; and whoſe right "hand is a right hand of falſhood." And there is not the leaſt intimation in ſcripture that either of theſe ceremonies were preſcribed and appointed by GOD, but voluntarily inſtituted and taken up by men. And thus among us the ceremony of ſwearing is by laying the hand on the holy goſpel, and kiſſing the book; which is both very ſolemn and ſignificant. And this is the reaſon why this ſolemn kind of oath is called a corporal oath, and was anciently ſo called; becauſe the ſign or ceremony of it is performed by ſome part of the body. And this ſolemnity is an aggravation of the perjury, becauſe it makes it both more deliberate, and more ſcandalous.

I ſhall ſpeak but briefly to the

IV. And laſt particular, viz. the ſacred obligation of an oath: becauſe it is a ſolemn appeal to GOD as a witneſs of the truth of what we ſay: to GOD, I ſay, from whoſe piercing and all-ſeeing eye, from whoſe perfect and infinite knowledge nothing is or can be hid; ſo that there is not a thought in our heart but he ſees it, nor a word in our tongue but he diſcerns the

SERM. XXII.

the truth or falſhood of it. Whenever we ſwear, we appeal to his knowledge, and refer ourſelves to his juſt judgment who is the powerful patron and protector of right, and the almighty judge and avenger of all falſhood and unrighteouſneſs. So that it is not poſſible for men to lay a more ſacred and ſolemn obligation upon their conſciences, than by the religion of an oath. Moſes very well expreſſeth it, by binding our ſouls with a bond, Numb. xxx. 2. "If "a man ſwear an oath, to bind his ſoul with a bond;" intimating that he that ſwears lays the ſtrongeſt obligation upon himſelf, and puts his ſoul in pawn for the truth of what he ſays. And this obligation no man can violate, but at the utmoſt peril of the judgment and vengeance of GOD. For every oath implies a curſe upon ourſelves in caſe of perjury, as Plutarch obſerves. And this was always the ſenſe of mankind concerning the obligation of oaths. *Nullum vinculum ad aſtringendam fidem majores noſtri jurejurando arctius eſſe voluerunt*, ſaith Tully; "Our fore-"fathers had no ſtricter bond whereby to oblige the "faith of men to one another, than that of an "oath." To the ſame purpoſe is that in the comedian, *Aliud ſi ſcirem, quo firmare meam apud vos poſſem fidem, ſanctius quam jurjurandum, id pollicerer tibi.* "If I knew any thing more ſacred than an oath, "whereby to confirm to you the truth of what I "ſay, I would make uſe of it."

I will crave your patience a little longer, whilſt by way of inference from this diſcourſe, I repreſent to you the great ſin of ſwearing in common converſation, upon trivial and needleſs occaſions, and the heinouſneſs of the ſin of perjury.

1. Firſt,

SERM. XXII.

1. First, the great sin of swearing, upon trivial and needless occasions, in common conversation. Because an oath is a solemn thing, and reserved for great occasions, to give confirmation to our word in some weighty matter, and to put an end to controversies which cannot otherwise be peremptorily and satisfactorily decided. And therefore to use oaths upon light occasions argues great profaneness and irreverence of almighty God. So Ulpian the great Roman lawyer observes, *Nonnullos esse faciles ad jurandum contemptu religionis*; "that mens proneness to "swearing comes from a contempt of religion;" than which nothing disposeth men more to atheism and infidelity. Besides that it doth many times surprise men unawares into perjury: and how can it be otherwise, when men use to interlard all their careless talk with oaths, but that they must often be perjured? And which is worse, it prepares men for deliberate perjury; for with those who are accustomed to swear upon light occasions, an oath will go off with them more roundly about weightier matters. "From a common custom of swearing (saith Hiero-"cles) men easily slide into perjury: therefore (says "he) if thou wouldst not be perjured, do not use to "swear." And this perhaps is the meaning of St. James, when he cautions christians so vehemently against common swearing, ἵνα μὴ εἰς ὑπόκρισιν, πέσητε, (for so some of the best ancient copies read it) "lest ye fall into hypocrisy," that is, lest ye lye and be perjured, by using yourselves to rash and inconsiderate swearing.

And men expose themselves to this danger to no purpose; oaths in common discourse being so far

2.

SERM. XXII.

from confirming a man's word, that with wiſe men they much weaken it: for common ſwearing (if it have any ſerious meaning at all) argues in a man a perpetual diſtruſt of his own reputation, and is an acknowledgment that he thinks his bare word not to be worthy of credit. And it is ſo far from adorning and filling a man's diſcourſe, that it makes it look ſwoln and bloated, and more bold and bluſtring, than becomes perſons of gentle and good breeding. Beſides that it is a great incivility, becauſe it highly offends and grates upon all ſober and conſiderate perſons; who cannot be preſumed with any manner of eaſe and patience to hear GOD affronted, and his great and glorious name ſo irreverently toſt upon every ſlight occaſion.

And it is no excuſe to men that many times they do it ignorantly, and not obſerving and knowing what they do. For certainly it is no extenuation of a fault, that a man hath got the habit of it ſo perfect that he commits it when he does not think of it. Which conſideration ſhould make men oppoſe the beginnings of this vice, leſt it grow into a habit very hard to be left. *Nemo novit, niſi qui expertus eſt, quàm ſit difficile conſuetudinem jurandi extinguere*, ſaith St. Auſtin; "no man knows, but he that hath tried, "how hard it is to get rid of this cuſtom of ſwear-"ing:" but yet it is certain men may do it, by reſolution and great care of themſelves: for he that can chooſe whether he will ſpeak or not, can chooſe whether he will ſwear or not when he ſpeaks. *Major conſuetudo majorem intentionem flagitat*; "the more "inveterate a cuſtom is, the greater care ſhould be "uſed to break ourſelves of it."

In

SERM. XXII.

In ſhort, this practice is ſo contrary to ſo plain a precept of our SAVIOUR, and by the breach whereof we incur ſo great a danger (as St. James aſſures us) that it muſt be a great charity that can find out a way to reconcile a common cuſtom of ſwearing with a ſerious belief of the chriſtian religion: which I would to GOD thoſe who are concerned would ſeriouſly lay to heart; eſpecially, ſince this ſin, of all others, hath the leaſt of temptation to it. Profit or pleaſure there is none in it, nor any thing in mens natural tempers to incite them to it. For tho' ſome men pour out oaths ſo freely, as if they came naturally from them, yet ſurely no man is born of a ſwearing conſtitution.

All that can be pretended for it, is cuſtom and faſhion: but to ſhew that this is no excuſe, it is very obſervable that it is particularly in the matter of oaths and perjury that the HOLY GHOST gives that caution, "Thou ſhalt not follow a multitude to do evil."

And laſtly, it deſerves to be conſidered, that this ſin is ſo much the greater becauſe of the frequent returns of it in thoſe that are accuſtomed to it. So that altho' it were but ſmall in itſelf (as it is not) yet the frequent practice of this ſin would quickly mount it up to a great ſcore.

2. Secondly, to repreſent the heinouſneſs of the ſin of perjury. But before I aggravate this crime, it is fit to let men know how many ways they may be guilty of it.

1ſt, When a man aſſerts upon oath what he knows to be otherwiſe: or promiſeth what he does not intend to perform. In both theſe caſes the very act of ſwearing is perjury. And ſo likewiſe when a man

SERM. XXII.

promiſeth upon oath to do that which is unlawful for him to do, becauſe this oath is contrary to a former obligation.

2dly, When a man is uncertain whether what he ſwear to, be true. This likewiſe is perjury, in the act; though not of the ſame degree of guilt with the former, becauſe it is not ſo fully and directly againſt his knowledge and conſcience. For men ought to be certain of the truth of what they aſſert upon oath, and not to ſwear at a venture And therefore no man ought poſitively to ſwear to the truth of any thing but what he himſelf hath ſeen or heard: this being the higheſt aſſurance men are capable of in this world. In like manner, he is guilty of perjury in the ſame degree, who promiſeth upon oath what he is not morally and reaſonably certain he ſhall be able to perform.

3dly, They are likewiſe guilty of perjury, who do not uſe great plainneſs and ſimplicity in oaths; but anſwer equivocally and doubtfully, or with reſervation of ſomething in their minds, thinking thereby to ſalve the truth of what they ſay. And we all know who they are that make uſe of theſe arts, and maintain them to be lawful; to the infinite ſcandal of the chriſtian religion and prejudice of humane ſociety, by doing what in them lies to deſtroy all faith and mutual confidence among men. For what can be a greater affront to GOD, than to uſe his name to deceive men? And what can more directly overthrow the great end and uſe of oaths, which are for confirmation, and to put an end to ſtrife? whereas by theſe arts the thing is left in the ſame uncertainty it was before, and there is no deciſion

ciſion of it. For there is hardly any form of words can be deviſed ſo plain, as not to be liable to equivocation: to be ſure a man when he ſwears may always reſerve ſomething in his mind which will quite alter the ſenſe of whatever he can ſay or promiſe upon oath. And this may be laid down for a certain rule, that all departure from the ſimplicity of an oath is a degree of perjury, and a man is never a whit the leſs forſworn becauſe his perjury is a little finer and more artificial than ordinary. And though men think by this device to ſave themſelves harmleſs from the guilt of ſo great a ſin, they do really increaſe it, by adding to their iniquity the impudent folly of mocking GOD and deceiving themſelves. SERM. XXII.

And whereas it is pleaded in the favour of mental reſervation, that the whole propoſition, as made up of what is expreſt in words, and of that which is reſerved in the mind, is true; for inſtance, if a man being ask'd upon oath whether he be a prieſt, ſhall anſwer he is not, reſerving in his mind that he is not a prieſt of Bacchus, or ſome ſuch thing, the whole propoſition is true, and then they ſay a man may ſwear to that which is true, without danger of perjury: this is of no force, becauſe, though the whole propoſition be true, it is deceitful, and contrary to that ſincerity which ought to be in an oath: and the end of an oath is hereby likewiſe defeated, which is to aſcertain the truth of what we ſay: but if a man reſerve ſomething in his mind which alters the truth of what he ſays, the thing is ſtill as doubtful and uncertain as it was before. Beſides, if this be a good reaſon, a man may ſwear with reſervation in all caſes; becauſe the reaſon equally

SERM. XXII.

qually extends to all caſes; for if the truth of the propoſition, as made up of what is expreſs'd in words and reſerv'd in the mind, will excuſe a man from perjury, then no man can be perjur'd that ſwears with reſervation: but this the caſuiſts of the Roman church do not allow, but only in ſome particular caſes, as before an incompetent judge, or the like; for they ſee well enough that if this were allow'd in all caſes, it would deſtroy all faith among men. And therefore ſince the reaſon extends alike to all caſes, it is plain that it is to be allow'd in none.

4thly, He is guilty of perjury after the act, who having a real intention when he ſwears, to perform what he promiſeth, yet afterwards neglects to do it: not for want of power (for ſo long as that continues the obligation ceaſeth) but for want of will, and due regard to his oath.

Now that perjury is a moſt heinous ſin,' is evident, becauſe it is contrary to ſo plain and great a law of GOD; one of the ten words or precepts of the moral law, "Thou ſhalt not take the name of "the LORD thy GOD in vain"; thou ſhalt not bring or apply the name of GOD to a falſhood: or, as Joſephus renders it, "Thou ſhalt not adjure "GOD to a falſe thing:" which our SAVIOUR renders yet more plainly, Matth. v. 33. "Thou ſhalt "not forſwear thy ſelf". For he ſeems to refer to the third commandment when he ſays, "Ye have "heard that it was ſaid to them of old time, thou "ſhalt not forſwear thy ſelf," as he had done before to the 6th and 7th, when he ſays, "It was ſaid to "them of old time, thou ſhalt not kill, thou ſhalt

"not

" not commit adultery". So that the primary, if not the sole intention of this Law, " Thou shalt not " take the name of the LORD thy GOD in vain ", is to forbid the great sin of perjury. And I do not remember that in scripture the phrase of taking GOD's name in vain, is used in any other sense. And thus it is certainly used, Prov. xxx. 9. " Lest " I be poor and steal, and take the name of the " LORD my GOD in vain ", i. e. lest poverty should tempt me to steal, and stealth should engage me in perjury. For among the jews an oath was tendered to him that was suspected of theft, as appears from Levit. vi. 2. where it is said, " If any " one be guilty of theft, and lyeth concerning it, " or sweareth falsly; he shall restore all that about " which he hath sworn falsly. Lest I steal, and " take the name of the LORD my GOD in vain; " that is, be perjured, being examined upon oath concerning a thing stoln. And for this reason the thief and the perjured person are put together, Zech. v. 4. where it is said, that " a curse shall en- " ter into the house of the thief, and of him that " sweareth falsly by the name of GOD." From all which it is very probable, that the whole intention of the third commandment is to forbid this great sin of perjury. To deter men from which, a severe threatning is there added; " for the LORD will " not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in " vain; " that is, he will most severely punish such a one. And 'tis very observable, that there is no threatning added to any other commandment, but to this and the second, intimating to us that, next to idolatry and the worship of a false God, perjury

SERM. XXII.

is

SERM. XXII.

is one of the greateſt affronts that can be offered to the divine majeſty. This is one of thoſe ſins that cries ſo loud to heaven, and quickens the pace of GOD's judgments, Mal. iii. 9. "I will come near "to you in judgment, and be a ſwift witneſs a- "gainſt the ſwearer:" for this GOD threatens utter deſtruction to the man and his houſe, Zech. v. 4. ſpeaking of the "curſe that goeth over the face of "the whole earth; GOD (ſays he) will bring it "forth, and it ſhall enter into the houſe of him "that ſweareth falſly by the name of GOD, and ſhall "remain in the midſt of his houſe, and ſhall con- "ſume it with the timber thereof and the ſtones "thereof. It ſhall remain in the midſt of his houſe, "and ſhall conſume it." This ſin by the ſecret judgment of GOD undermines eſtates and families to the utter ruin of them. And among the heathen it was always reckoned one of the greateſt crimes, and which they did believe GOD did not only puniſh upon the guilty perſon himſelf, but upon his family and poſterity; and many times upon whole nations, as the prophet alſo tells us, that "be- "cauſe of oaths the land mourns."

I need not uſe many words to aggravate this ſin; it is certainly a crime of the higheſt nature. Deliberate perjury being directly againſt a man's knowledge, ſo that no man can commit it without ſtaring his conſcience in the face; which is one of the greateſt aggravations of any crime. And it is equally a ſin againſt both tables; being the higheſt affront to GOD, and of moſt injurious conſequence to men. It is an horrible abuſe of the name of GOD, an open contempt of his judgment, and an inſolent defiance

defiance of his vengeance: and in reſpect of men, it is not only a wrong to this or that particular perſon who ſuffers by it, but treaſon againſt humane ſociety; ſubverting at once the foundations of publick peace and juſtice, and the private ſecurity of every man's life and fortune. It is a defeating of the beſt and laſt way that the wiſdom of men could deviſe for the deciſion of doubtful matters. Solomon very fully and elegantly expreſſeth the deſtructive nature of this ſin, Prov. xxv. 18. "A falſe witneſs againſt "his neighbour is a maul, and a ſword, and a ſharp "arrow:" intimating, that amongſt all the inſtruments of ruine and miſchief that have been deviſed by mankind, none is of more pernicious conſequence to humane ſociety than perjury, and breach of faith. It is a peſtilence that uſually walketh in darkneſs, and a ſecret ſtab and blow, againſt which, many times, there is no poſſibility of defence. SERM. XXII.

And therefore it highly concerns thoſe who upon theſe and the like occaſions are called upon their oath, whether as jurors or witneſſes, to ſet GOD before their eyes, and to have his fear in their hearts whenever they come to take an oath. And to govern and diſcharge their conſciences in this matter by known and approved rules, and by the reſolutions of pious and wiſe men, and not by the looſe reaſonings and reſolutions of pamphlets, ſent abroad to ſerve the turns of unpeaceable and ill-minded men (whether atheiſts, or papiſts, or others) on purpoſe to debauch the conſciences of men by teaching them to play faſt and looſe with oaths. And it is a very ſad ſign of the decay of chriſtian religion among us, to ſee ſo many who call themſelves chriſtians,

SERM. XXII.

ſtians, to make ſo little conſcience of ſo great a ſin, as even the light of nature would bluſh and tremble at.

I will conclude all with thoſe excellent ſayings of the ſon of Sirach concerning theſe two ſins (I have been ſpeaking of) profane ſwearing and perjury, Eccl. xxiii. 9, 10, &c. "Accuſtom not thy mouth "to ſwearing; neither uſe thy ſelf to the naming of "the holy one. A man that uſeth much ſwearing "ſhall be filled with iniquity, and the plague ſhall "never depart from his houſe. If he ſhall offend, "his ſin ſhall be upon him; and if he acknow-"ledge not his ſin, he maketh a double offence. "And if he ſwear falſly, he ſhall not be innocent, "but his houſe ſhall be full of calamities." And to repreſent to us the dreadful nature of this ſin of perjury, "There is (ſaith he) a word that is cloth-"ed about with death," meaning a raſh and falſe oath; "There is a word that is clothed about "with death. GOD grant it be not found in the "heritage of Jacob: for all ſuch things ſhall be far "from the godly; and they will not wallow in theſe "ſins." From which GOD preſerve all good men, and make them careful to preſerve themſelves; as they value the preſent peace of their own conſciences, and the favour of almighty GOD in this world and the other, for his mercies ſake in JESUS CHRIST, To whom, &c.

A SER-

A

SERMON

Preached at the

FUNERAL

Of the Reverend

Mr. *THOMAS GOUGE*,

the 4th of *November*, 1681.

At St. ANNE's BLACK-FRIERS;

With a brief account of his LIFE.

To the right worſhipful the

PRESIDENT,

THE

TREASURER,

AND

The reſt of the worthy GOVERNORS of the hoſpital of *Chriſt-Church* in *London.*

WHEN *upon the requeſt of ſome of the relations and friends of the reverend Mr.* GOUGE, *deceaſed, and to ſpeak the truth, in compliance with*

with mine own inclination to do right to the memory of ſo good a man, and to ſet ſo great an example in the view of all men, I had determined to make this diſcourſe publick; I knew not where more fitly to addreſs it than to yourſelves who are the living pattern of the ſame virtue, and the faithful diſpenſers and managers of one of the beſt and greateſt charities in the world; eſpecially ſince he had a particular relation to you, and was pleaſed for ſome years laſt paſt, without any other conſideration, but that of charity, to employ his conſtant pains in catechiſing the poor children of your hoſpital; wiſely conſidering of how great conſequence it was to this city, to have the foundations of religion well laid in the tender years of ſo many perſons

as

as were afterwards to be planted there in ſeveral profeſſions; and from a true humility of mind, being ready to ſtoop to the meaneſt office and ſervice to do good.

I have heard from an intimate friend of his, that he would ſometimes with great pleaſure ſay, that he had two livings *which he would not exchange for two of the greateſt in* England, *meaning* Wales *and* Chriſt's hoſpital: *contrary to common account he eſteemed every advantage of being uſeful and ſerviceable to* GOD *and men a* rich benefice, *and thoſe his beſt* patrons *and* benefactors, *not who did him good, but who gave him the opportunity and means of doing it. To you therefore as his* patrons *this ſermon doth*

doth of right belong, and to you I humbly dedicate it; heartily beſeeching almighty GOD, *to raiſe up many by his example that may* ſerve their generation according to the will of God, *as he did. I am*

Your faithful

and humble Servant,

JO. TILLOTSON.

SERMON XXIII.

Preached at the funeral of Mr. *Thomas Gouge*: With a ſhort account of his life.

LUKE xx. 37, 38.

Now that the dead are raiſed, even Moſes ſhewed at the buſh, when he calleth the LORD *the* GOD *of Abraham, and the* GOD *of Iſaac, and the* GOD *of Jacob. For he is not a* GOD *of the dead, but of the living; for all live to him.*

SERM. XXIII.

THE occaſion of theſe words of our bleſſed SAVIOUR was an objection which the ſadducees made againſt the reſurrection, grounded upon a caſe which had ſometimes happened among them, of a woman that had ſeven brethren ſucceſſively to her husbands. Upon which caſe they put this queſtion to our SAVIOUR; "whoſe wife of "the ſeven ſhall this woman be at the reſurrection?" that is, if men live in another world, how ſhall the controverſy between theſe ſeven brethren be decided? for they all ſeem to have an equal claim to this woman, each of them having had her to wife.

This captious queſtion was not eaſy to be anſwered by the phariſees, who fancied the enjoyments of the next life to be of the ſame kind with the ſenſual pleaſures of this world, only greater and more durable. From which tradition of the jews concerning

SERM. XXIII.

a ſenſual paradiſe, Mahomet ſeems to have taken the pattern of his: as he did likewiſe many other things from the jewiſh traditions. Now upon this ſuppoſition, that in the next life there will be marrying and giving in marriage, it was a queſtion not eaſily ſatisfied, "whoſe wife of the ſeven this woman ſhould "then be?"

But our SAVIOUR clearly avoids the whole force of it, by ſhewing the different ſtate of men in this world, and in the other. "The children of this "world (ſays he) marry, and are given in mar-"riage; but they who ſhall be accounted worthy to "obtain that world, and the reſurrection from the "dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage." And he does not barely and magiſterially aſſert this doctrine, but gives a plain and ſubſtantial reaſon for it; becauſe they cannot die any more. After men have lived a while in this world they are taken away by death, and therefore marriage is neceſſary to maintain a ſucceſſion of mankind; but in the other world men ſhall become immortal and live for ever, and then the reaſon of marriage will wholly ceaſe: for when men can die no more, there will then be no need of any new ſupplies of mankind.

Our SAVIOUR having thus cleared himſelf of this objection by taking away the ground and foundation of it, he produceth an argument for the proof of the reſurrection, in the words of my text; "Now "that the dead are raiſed, Moſes even ſhewed at "the buſh, when he calleth the LORD the GOD of "Abraham, the GOD of Iſaac, and the GOD of "Jacob." That is, when in one of his books GOD is brought in ſpeaking to him out of the buſh, and calling

calling himſelf by the title of the GOD of Abraham, the GOD of Iſaac, and the GOD of Jacob. From whence our SAVIOUR infers the reſurrection, becauſe "GOD is not the GOD of the dead, but of the living: for all live to him." SERM. XXIII.

My deſign from theſe words is, to ſhew the force and ſtrength of this argument which our SAVIOUR urgeth for the proof of the reſurrection. In order whereunto I ſhall,

Firſt, conſider it as an argument *ad hominem*, and ſhew the fitneſs and force of it to convince thoſe with whom our SAVIOUR diſputed.

Secondly, I ſhall inquire, whether it be more than an argument *ad hominem*. And if it be, wherein the real and abſolute force of it doth conſiſt?

And then, I ſhall apply this doctrine of the reſurrection to the preſent occaſion.

I. Firſt, we will conſider it as an argument *ad hominem*, and ſhew the fitneſs and force of it to convince thoſe with whom our SAVIOUR diſputed. And this will appear if we carefully conſider theſe four things.

1. What our SAVIOUR intended directly and immediately to prove by this argument.

2. The extraordinary veneration which the jews in general had for the writings of Moſes above any other books of the old teſtament.

3. The peculiar notion which the jews had concerning the uſe of this phraſe or expreſſion of GOD's being any one's GOD.

4. The great reſpect which the jews had for theſe three fathers of their nation, Abraham, Iſaac and Jacob. For each of theſe make our SAVIOUR's argument more forcible againſt thoſe with whom he diſputed.

SERM. XXIII.

First, we will consider what our SAVIOUR intended directly and immediately to prove by this argument. And that was this, that there is another state after this life, wherein men shall be happy or miserable according as they have lived in this world. And this doth not only suppose the immortality of the soul, but forasmuch as the body is an essential part of man, doth by consequence infer the resurrection of the body; because otherwise the man would not be happy or miserable in the other world. But I cannot see any sufficient ground to believe that our SAVIOUR intended by this argument directly and immediately to prove the resurrection of the body, but only by consequence, and as it follows from the admission of a future state wherein men shall be rewarded or punished. For that reason of our SAVIOUR, that "GOD is not a GOD of the dead, but "of the living," if it did directly prove the resurrection of the body, it would prove that the bodies of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were raised to life again, at or before that time when GOD spake to Moses and called himself the GOD of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: but we do not believe this; and therefore ought not to suppose that it was the intention of our SAVIOUR directly and immediately to prove the resurrection of the body, but only (as I said before) a future state. And that this was all our SAVIOUR intended will more plainly appear, if we consider what that error of the sadducees was which our SAVIOUR here confutes. And Josephus, who very well understood the difference of the sects among the jews, and gives a particular account of them, makes not the least mention of any controversy between

tween the phariſees and the ſadducees about the reſur- SERM. XXIII.
rection of the body. All that he ſays, is this, that the phariſees hold the immortality of the ſoul, and that there are rewards and puniſhments in another world: but the ſadducees denied all this, and that there was any other ſtate after this life. And this is the very ſame account with that which is given of them in the new teſtament, ver. 27. of this chapter. "The Sadducees who deny that there is any reſurrec-"tion." The meaning of which is more fully declared, Act. xxiii. 8. "The ſadducees ſay that there is no reſur-"rection, neither angel nor ſpirit; but the phariſees "confeſs both." That is, the ſadducees denied that there was any other ſtate of men after this life, and that there was any ſuch thing as an immortal ſpirit, either angels, or the ſouls of men ſurviving their bodies. And, as Dr. Hammond hath judiciouſly obſerved, this is the true importance of the word ἀνάστασις, viz. a future or another ſtate; unleſs in ſuch texts where the context does reſtrain it to the raiſing again of the body, or where ſome word that denotes the body, as σώματος or σαρκὸς, is added to it.

Secondly, the force of this argument againſt thoſe with whom our SAVIOUR diſputed will farther appear, if we conſider the great veneration which the jews in general had for the writings of Moſes above any other books of the old teſtament; which they (eſpecially the ſadducees) looked upon only as explications and comments upon the law of Moſes: But they eſteemed nothing as a neceſſary article of faith which had not ſome foundation in the writings of Moſes. And this ſeems to me to be the true reaſon why our SAVIOUR choſe to confute them out of Moſes,

SERM. XXII.

Moſes, rather than any other part of the old teſtament: and not, as many learned men have imagined, becauſe the ſadducees did not receive any part of the old teſtament, but only the five books of Moſes; ſo that it was in vain to argue againſt them out of any other. This I know hath been a general opinion, grounded I think upon the miſtake of a paſſage in Joſephus, who ſays the ſadducees only receive the written law. But if we carefully conſider that paſſage, we ſhall find that Joſephus doth not there oppoſe the law to the other books of the old teſtament, which were alſo written; but to oral tradition. For he ſays expreſly, that "the ſadducees only receive "the written law, but the phariſees, over and "beſides what was written, receive the oral which "they call tradition.

I deny not but that in the later prophets there are more expreſs texts for the proof of a future ſtate, than any are to be found in the books of Moſes. As Daniel xii. 2. "And many of them that ſleep "in the duſt of the earth ſhall awake, ſome to ever-"laſting life, and ſome to ſhame and everlaſting "contempt." And indeed it ſeems very plain that holy men among the jews, towards the expiration of the legal diſpenſation, had ſtill clearer and more expreſs apprehenſions concerning a future ſtate than are to be met with in the writings of Moſes, or of any of the prophets.

The law given by Moſes did ſuppoſe the immortality of the ſouls of men, and the expectation of another life after this, as principles of religion in ſome degree naturally known; but made no new and expreſs revelation of theſe things. Nor was there

any

any occaſion for it, the law of Moſes being a politi- SERM. XXIII.
cal law, not intended for the government of mankind, but of one particular nation; and therefore was eſtabliſh'd, as political laws are, upon temporal promiſes and threatnings; promiſing temporal proſperity to the obſervation of its precepts, and threatning the breach of them with temporal judgments and calamities.

And this I take to be the true reaſon why arguments fetch'd from another world are ſo obſcurely inſiſted upon under that diſpenſation; not but that another life after this was always ſuppos'd, and was undoubtedly the hope and expectation of good men under the law, but the clear diſcovery of it was reſerv'd for the times of the MESSIAS. And therefore as thoſe times drew on, and the SUN of righteouſneſs was near his riſing, the ſhadows of the night began to be chaſed away, and mens apprehenſions of a future ſtate to clear up; ſo that in the time of the Maccabees good men ſpake with more confidence and aſſurance of theſe things.

It is likewiſe to be conſider'd, that the temporal calamities and ſufferings with which the jews were almoſt continually haraſs'd from the time of their captivity, had very much wean'd good men from the conſideration of temporal promiſes, and awaken'd their minds to the more ſerious thoughts of another world. It being natural to men when they are deſtitute of preſent comfort, to ſupport themſelves with the expectation of better things for the future, and as the apoſtle to the Hebrews expreſſeth it, chap. vi. ver. 18. "to fly for refuge to lay hold upon the "hope that is before them," and to employ their reaſon

SERM. XXIII.

son to fortify themselves as well as they can in that persuasion.

And this I doubt not was the true occasion of those clearer and riper apprehensions of good men concerning a future state, in those times of distress and persecution: it being very agreeable to the wisdom and goodness of the divine providence not to leave his people destitute of sufficient support under great trials and sufferings: and nothing but the hopes of a better life could have born up the spirits of men under such cruel tortures. And of this we have a most remarkable instance in the history of the seven brethren in the Maccabees, who being cruelly tortured and put to death by Antiochus, do most expressly declare their confident expectation of a resurrection to a better life. To which history the apostle certainly refers, Heb. xi. 35. when he says, "others were "tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they "might obtain a better resurrection:" where the word, which we render were tortur'd, is ἐτυμπανίσθησαν, which is the very word used in the Maccabees to express the particular kind of torture us'd upon them; besides that being offer'd deliverance they most resolutely refus'd to accept of it, with this express declaration that they hop'd for a resurrection to a better life.

But to return to my purpose, notwithstanding there might be more clear and express texts to this purpose in the ancient prophets, yet our SAVIOUR knowing how great a regard not only the sadducees, but all the jews had to the authority of Moses, he thought fit to bring his proof of the resurrection out of his writings, as that which was the most likely to convince them. Thirdly,

SERM. XXIII.

Thirdly, if we consider farther the peculiar notion which the jews had concerning the use of this phrase or expression of GOD's being any one's GOD. And that was this. That GOD is no where in scripture said to be any one's GOD while he was alive. And therefore they tell us that while Isaac lived, GOD is not called the GOD of Isaac, but the fear of Isaac. As Gen. xxxi. 42. "Except the GOD of Abraham, "and the fear of Isaac had been with me;" and ver. 53. when Laban made a covenant with Jacob, 'tis said that "Laban did swear by the GOD of "Abraham, and the GOD of Nahor, and the GOD "of their fathers, but Jacob swore by the fear of "his father Isaac." I will not warrant this observation to be good, because I certainly know it is not true. For GOD doth expressly call himself the GOD of Isaac, while Isaac was yet alive, Gen. xxviii. 13. "I am the LORD GOD of Abraham thy father, and "the GOD of Isaac." It is sufficient to my purpose, that this was a notion anciently current among the jews. And therefore our SAVIOUR's argument from this expression must be so much the stronger against them: for if the souls of men be extinguished by death (as the sadducees believed) what did it signify to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to have GOD called their GOD after they were dead? but surely, for GOD to be any one's GOD, doth signify some great benefit and advantage; which yet (according to the notion which the jews had of this phrase) could not respect this life, because, according to them, GOD is not said to be any one's GOD 'till after he is dead: but it is thus said of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob after their death, and therefore our SAVIOUR infers very strong-

SERM. XXIII.

ly againſt them, that Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob were not extinguiſhed by death, but do ſtill live ſomewhere: for "GOD is not the GOD of the dead, "but of the living." And then he adds by way of farther explication, "for all live to him." That is, though thoſe good men who are departed this life, do not ſtill live to us, here in this world, yet "they "live to GOD," and are with him.

Fourthly, if we conſider the great reſpect which the jews had for thoſe three fathers of their nation, Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob. They had an extraordinary opinion of them, and eſteemed nothing too great to be thought or ſaid of them. And therefore we find that they looked upon it as a great arrogance for any man to aſſume any thing to himſelf that might ſeem to ſet him above Abraham, Iſaac, or Jacob. With what indignation did they fly upon our SAVIOUR on this account? John iv. 12. "Art thou "greater than our father Jacob?" and chap. viii. ver. 53. "Art thou greater than our father Abra-"ham? whom makeſt thou thyſelf?" Now they who had ſo ſuperſtitious a veneration for them, would eaſily believe any thing of privilege to belong to them: ſo that our SAVIOUR doth with great advantage inſtance in them, in favour of whom they would be inclined to extend the meaning of any promiſe to the utmoſt, and allow it to ſignify as much as the words could poſſibly bear. So that it is no wonder that the text tells us that this argument put the ſadducees to ſilence. They durſt not attempt a thing ſo odious, as to go about to take away any thing of privilege from Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob.

And

And thus I have, as briefly as the matter would bear, endeavoured to shew the fitness and force of this argument to convince those with whom our SAVIOUR disputed. I come now, in the

II. Second place, to inquire, whether this be any more than an argument *ad hominem*; and if it be, wherein the real and absolute force of it doth consist?

I do not think it necessary to believe that every argument used by our SAVIOUR or his apostles, is absolutely and in itself conclusive of the matter in debate. For an argument which doth not really prove the thing in question, may yet be a very good argument *ad hominem*; and in some cases more convincing to him with whom we dispute than that which is a better argument in itself. Now it is possible, that our SAVIOUR's intention might not be to bring a conclusive proof of the resurrection, but only to confute those who would needs be disputing with him. And to that purpose an argument *ad hominem*, which proceeded upon grounds which they themselves could not deny, might be very proper and effectual. But although it be not necessary to believe, that this was more than an argument *ad hominem*; yet it is the better to us, if it be absolutely and in itself conclusive of the thing in question. And this I hope will sufficiently appear, if we consider these four things.

1. That for GOD to be any one's GOD doth signify some very extraordinary blessing and happiness to those persons of whom this is said.

2. If we consider the eminent faith and obedience of the persons to whom this promise is made.

SERM. XXIII.

3. Their condition in this world.

4. The general importance of this promiſe, abſtracting from the perſons particularly ſpecified and named in it, Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob.

Firſt, if we conſider that for GOD to be any one's GOD doth ſignify ſome very extraordinary bleſſing and happineſs to thoſe perſons of whom this is ſaid. It is a big word for GOD to declare himſelf to be any one's GOD: and the leaſt we can imagine to be meant by it, is that GOD will in an extraordinary manner employ his power and wiſdom to do him good: that he will concern himſelf more for the happineſs of thoſe whoſe GOD he declares himſelf to be, than for others.

Secondly, if we conſider the eminent faith and obedience of Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob. Abraham left his country in obedience to GOD, not knowing whither he was to go. And which is one of the moſt unparallel'd and ſtrange inſtances of faith and obedience that can almoſt be imagined, he was willing to have ſacrificed his only ſon at the command of GOD. Iſaac and Jacob were alſo very good men, and devout worſhippers of the true GOD, when almoſt the whole world was ſunk into idolatry and all manner of impiety. Now what can we imagine, but that the good God did deſign ſome extraordinary reward to ſuch faithful ſervants of his? eſpecially if we conſider, that he intended this gracious declaration of his concerning them, for a ſtanding encouragement to all thoſe who in after ages ſhould follow the faith and tread in the ſteps of Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob.

Thirdly,

SERM. XXIII.

Thirdly, if we consider the condition of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in this world. The scripture tells us, that "they were pilgrims and stran-"gers upon the earth;" had no fixed and settled habitation, but were forced to wander from one kingdom and country to another; that they were exposed to many hazards and difficulties, to great troubles and afflictions in this world; so that there was no such peculiar happiness befel them in this life above the common rate of men, as may seem to fill up the big words of this promise, that "GOD would "be their GOD". For so far as the scripture history informs us, and farther we cannot know of this matter, Esau was as prosperous as Jacob; and Jacob had a great many more troubles and afflictions in this life than Esau had. But surely when GOD calls himself the GOD of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, this signifies that GOD intended some very peculiar blessing and advantage to them above others: which seeing they did not enjoy in this world, it is very reasonable to believe that one time or other this gracious declaration and promise of GOD was made good to them.

And therefore the apostle to the Hebrews, chap. xi. from this very expression of GOD's being said to be the GOD of Abraham and others, argues that some extraordinary happiness was reserved for them in another world: and that upon this very ground I am now speaking of, namely, because the condition of Abraham and some others, was not such in this world as might seem to answer the fulness of this promise. "All these (says he) died in the faith, "not having received the promises, but having seen "them

SERM. XXIII. "them afar off, and were perſuaded of them, and "embraced them, and confeſſed that they were "ſtrangers and pilgrims upon the earth." From whence he reaſons very ſtrongly, that theſe good men might reaſonably expect ſomething better than any thing that had befallen them in this world. "For they (ſays he) that ſay ſuch things, declare "plainly that they ſeek a country;" which at the 16th verſe he calls "a better country, that is a hea-"venly. They that ſay ſuch things:" that is, they who acknowledge themſelves to be ſtrangers and pilgrims in the earth, and yet pretend that GOD had promiſed to be their God, declare plainly that they expect ſome reward beyond this life. From all which he concludes, "Wherefore GOD is not aſhamed to "be called their GOD, becauſe he hath prepared "for them a city;" intimating that if no happineſs had remained for theſe good men in another world, this promiſe of GOD's being their GOD, would ſhamefully have fallen ſhort of what it ſeemed to import, viz. ſome extraordinary reward and bleſſing worthy of GOD to beſtow; ſomething more certain and laſting than any of the enjoyments of this world; which ſince GOD hath abundantly performed to them in the happineſs of another life, his promiſe to them was made good to the full, and he needed not be aſhamed to be called their GOD. But if nothing beyond this life had been reſerved for them, that ſaying of old Jacob towards the concluſion of his life, "few and evil have the days of the "years of my life been," would have been an eternal reflection upon the truth and faithfulneſs of him who had ſo often called himſelf the GOD of Jacob.

But

SERM. XXIII.

But now, becauſe to all this it may be ſaid, that this promiſe ſeems to have been made good to Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, in this world: for was not GOD the GOD of Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, when he took ſuch a particular and extraordinary care of them, and protected them from the manifold dangers they were expoſed to by ſuch a ſpecial and immediate providence, "ſuffering no one to do them "harm, but rebuking even kings for their ſake?" Was not he Abraham's GOD, when he bleſt him ſo miraculouſly with a ſon in his old age, and with ſo conſiderable an eſtate to leave to him? was not that ſaying of Jacob a great acknowledgment of the gracious providence of GOD towards him, "With my ſtaff "paſſed I over this Jordan, and now I am become "two bands?" and though it needs muſt be a very cutting affliction to him to loſe his ſon Joſeph, as he thought he had done, yet that was more than recompenſed to him in Joſeph's ſtrange advancement in Egypt, whereby GOD put into his hands the opportunity of ſaving his father and his whole family alive. And was not GOD the GOD of Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, in making them fathers of ſo numerous an offſpring, as afterwards became a great nation: and in giving them a fruitful land; and bringing them to the quiet poſſeſſion of it by ſuch a ſeries of wonderful miracles? what need then is there of extending this promiſe to another world? doth it not ſeem abundantly made good in thoſe great bleſſings which GOD beſtowed upon them whilſt they lived, and afterwards upon their poſterity, in this world? And does not this agree well enough with the firſt and moſt obvious ſenſe of theſe words, "I

am

SERM. XXIII.

" am the GOD of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," that is, I am he that was their GOD while they were alive, and am still the GOD of their posterity for their sakes; I say, because the three former considerations are liable to this objection, which seems wholly to take off the force of this argument; therefore for the full clearing of this matter, I will add one consideration more.

Fourthly then, we will consider the general importance of this promise, abstracting from the particular persons specified and named in it, viz. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and that is, that GOD will make a wide and plain difference between good and bad men; he will be so the GOD of good men as he is not of the wicked: and some time or other put every good man into a better and happier condition than any wicked man: so that the general importance of this promise is finally resolved into the equity and justice of the divine providence.

And unless we suppose another life after this, it will certainly be very hard, and I think impossible, to reconcile the history of the old testament, and the common appearances of things in this world, with the justice and goodness of GOD's providence.

It cannot be denied, but that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and several good men in the old testament, had many signal testimonies of the divine favour vouchsafed to them in this world: but we read likewise of several wicked men that had as large a share of temporal blessings. It is very true that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had great estates, and were petty princes: but Pharaoh was a mighty prince in comparison of them; and the kingdom of Egypt, which

which probably was the firſt and chief ſeat of Idolatry, was at the ſame time one of the moſt potent and flouriſhing kingdoms in the world: and was bleſt with a prodigious plenty, whereby they were furniſhed with ſtore of corn when good Jacob and his family had like to have periſhed by famine. 'Tis true, Joſeph was advanced to great power in Egypt, and thereby had the opportunity of ſaving his father's houſe, by ſettling and feeding them in Egypt: but then it is to be conſidered again, that this coſt them very dear, and their coming thither was the occaſion of a long and cruel bondage to Jacob's poſterity, ſo that we ſee that theſe good men had no ſuch bleſſings, but what were common with them to many others that were wicked: and the bleſſings which God beſtowed upon them, had great abatements by the intermixture of many and ſore afflictions.

It ſeems then upon the whole matter, to be very plain, that the Providences of God in this world towards good men are ſo contrived, that it may ſufficiently appear, to thoſe who wiſely conſider the works of God, that they are not neglected by him; and yet that theſe outward bleſſings are ſo promiſcuouſly diſpenſed, that no man can certainly be concluded to be a good man from any happineſs he enjoys in this life: and the proſperity of good men is uſually on purpoſe ſo ſhadowed and mixed with afflictions, as may juſtly raiſe their hopes to the expectation of a more perfect happineſs and better reward than any they meet with in this world.

And if ſo, then the general importance of this promiſe, that God will be the God of good men,

 muſt

SERM. XXIII.

must necessarily signify something beyond this world: because in this world there is not that clear difference universally made between good and bad men which the justice of the divine providence doth require, and which seems to be intended, in the general sense of this promise. For if this promise (though personally made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) be intended, as the scripture tells us it was for a standing encouragement to good men in all ages, then it must contain in it this general truth, "that "God will some time or other plentifully reward "every good man;" that is, he will do something far better for him than for any wicked man: but if there be no life after this, it is impossible to reconcile this sense of it with the course of God's providence, and with the history of the bible.

And to make this out fully, and at once, I will only produce that single instance of Abel and Cain. "Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than "Cain, and he had this testimony, that he pleased "God;" which was in effect to declare, that God was the God of Abel, and not of Cain; so that by virtue of the general importance of this promise, it might justly be expected that Abel's condition should have been much better than Cain's: but if there be no happiness after this life, Abel's was evidently much worse. For upon this very account, that he pleased God better, he was killed by Cain, who had offered to God a slight and contemptuous offering. And Cain lived a long time after, and grew great, and built cities. Now supposing there were no other life after this, this must have been a most horrible example to all ages, from the beginning

of

of the world to the end of it, and have made men for ever afraid to pleaſe GOD upon ſuch hard terms; when they were ſure of no other reward for ſo doing, but to be oppreſs'd and ſlain by the hands of the wicked. So that if this were really the caſe, it would puzzle all the wit and reaſon of mankind to vindicate the equity and juſtice of the divine providence, and to reſcue it out of the hands of this terrible objection. SERM. XXIII.

And thus have I, as briefly as I could, endeavoured to clear to you the force of this argument uſed by our SAVIOUR for the proof of the reſurrection. And have the longer inſiſted upon it, becauſe at firſt appearance it ſeems to be but a very obſcure and remote argument: and yet ſo much the more neceſſary to be cleared, becauſe this in all probability was that very text upon which the jews in our SAVIOUR's time grounded their belief of a future ſtate, in oppoſition to the error of the ſadducees; and which they call'd by way of eminency "the promiſe made "of GOD unto the fathers." As will plainly appear, if we conſider what St. Paul ſays to this purpoſe; when he appeals ſo often to the phariſees for his agreement with them in this article of the reſurrection, and likewiſe in the ground of it from "the promiſe made of GOD unto the fathers." Acts xxiv. 14, 15. "But this I confeſs unto thee, "that after the way which they call hereſy, ſo "worſhip I the GOD of my fathers, believing "all things which are written in the Law and "the prophets; and have hope towards GOD, which "they themſelves alſo allow, that there ſhall be a "reſurrection of the dead." From whence it is clear,

SERM. XXIII.

that they both grounded their hope of the resurrection upon something written in the law and the prophets: and what that was, he expresseth more particular, chap. xxvi. ver. 6, 7. "And now I stand, "and am judged for the hope of the promise made "of GOD unto our fathers; unto which promise our "twelve tribes, instantly serving GOD day and "night, hope to come." By the promise made of GOD unto the fathers, he means some promise made by GOD to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; for so St. Luke more than once, in his history of the Acts, explains this phrase of the GOD of their fathers, Acts iii. 13. "The GOD of Abraham, and of Isaac, "and of Jacob, the GOD of our fathers;" and chap. vii. ver. 32. "I am the GOD of thy fathers, "the GOD of Abraham, and the GOD of Isaac, and "the GOD of Jacob." Now what was the great and famous promise which GOD made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? was it not this of being their GOD? So that it was this very promise upon which St. Paul tells us the jews grounded their hope of a future state, because they understood it necessarily to signify some blessing and happiness beyond this life.

And now having, I hope, sufficiently clear'd this matter, I shall make some improvement of this doctrine of a future state, and that to these three purposes.

1. To raise our minds above this world and the enjoyments of this present life. Were but men thoroughly convinced of this plain and certain truth, that there is a vast difference between time and eternity, between a few years and everlasting ages: would we but represent to ourselves what thoughts and

and apprehenſions dying perſons have of this world; how vain and empty a thing it appears to them, how like a pageant and a ſhadow it looks as it paſſeth away from them, methinks none of theſe things could be a ſufficient temptation to any man to forget God and his ſoul; but, notwithſtanding all the delights and pleaſures of ſenſe, we ſhould be ſtrangely intent upon the concernments of another world, and almoſt wholly taken up with the thoughts of that vaſt eternity which we are ready to lanch into. For what is there in this world, this waſte and howling wilderneſs, this rude and barbarous country which we are but to paſs through, which ſhould detain our affections here, and take off our thoughts from our everlaſting habitation; from that better and that heavenly country, where we hope to live and be happy for ever?

If we ſettle our affections upon the enjoyments of this preſent life, ſo as to be extremely pleas'd and tranſported with them, and to ſay in our hearts, it is good for us to be here; if we be exceſſively griev'd or diſcontented for the want or loſs of them, and if we look upon our preſent ſtate in this world any otherwiſe than as a preparation and paſſage to a better life, it is a ſign that our faith and hope of the happineſs of another life is but very weak and faint, and that we do not heartily and in good earneſt believe what we pretend to do concerning theſe things. For did we ſtedfaſtly believe and were thoroughly perſuaded of what our religion ſo plainly declares to us concerning the unſpeakable and endleſs happineſs of good men in another world, our affections would ſit more looſe to this world, and our hopes would raiſe

SERM. XXIII.

raiſe our hearts as much above theſe preſent and ſenſible things as the heavens are high above the earth; we ſhould value nothing here below, but as it ſerves for our preſent ſupport and paſſage, or may be made a means to ſecure and increaſe our future felicity.

2. The conſideration of another life ſhould quicken our preparation for that bleſſed ſtate which remains for us in the other world. This life is a ſtate of probation and trial. This world is GOD's ſchool, where immortal ſpirits clothed with fleſh are trained and bred up for eternity. And then certainly it is not an indifferent thing and a matter of ſlight concernment to us, how we live and demean ourſelves in this world: whether we indulge ourſelves in ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, or live ſoberly, and righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world: no, it is a matter of infinite moment, as much as our ſouls and all eternity are worth. Let us not deceive ourſelves; "for as we ſow, ſo ſhall we reap: if we ſow to the "fleſh, we ſhall of the fleſh reap corruption; but if "we ſow to the ſpirit, we ſhall of the ſpirit reap "everlaſting life. Light is ſown for the righteous, "and gladneſs for the upright in heart. The righ- "teous hath hopes in his death. Mark the perfect "man, and behold the upright, for the end of that "man is peace."

But the ungodly are not ſo: whoever hath lived a wicked and vicious life, feels ſtrange throws and pangs in his conſcience when he comes to be caſt upon a ſick bed. "The wicked is like the troubled "ſea (ſaith the prophet) when it cannot reſt;" full of trouble and confuſion, eſpecially in a dying hour.

It

It is death to such a man to look back upon his life, and a hell to him to think of eternity. When his guilty and trembling soul is ready to leave his body, and just stepping into the other world, what horror and amazement do then seize upon him? what a rage doth such a man feel in his breast, when he seriously considers, that he hath been so great a fool as for the false and imperfect pleasure of a few days to make himself miserable for ever? SERM. XXIII.

3. Let the consideration of that unspeakable reward which GOD hath promised to good men at the resurrection, encourage us to obedience and a holy life. We serve a great prince who is able to promote us to honour; a most gracious master who will not let the least service we do for him pass unrewarded. This is the inference which the apostle makes from his large discourse of the doctrine of the resurrection, 1 Cor. xv. 58. "Wherefore, my be-"loved brethren, be ye stedfast and unmoveable, "always abounding in the work of the LORD, for-"asmuch as ye know that your labour shall not be in "vain in the LORD." Nothing will make death more welcome to us, than a constant course of service and obedience to GOD. "Sleep (saith Solomon) "is sweet to the labouring man:" so after a great diligence and industry in "working out our own "salvation," and (as it is said of David) "serving "our generation according to the will of GOD," how pleasant will it be to fall asleep? And as an useful and well-spent life will make our death to be sweet, so our resurrection to be glorious. Whatever acts of piety we do to GOD, or of charity to men; whatever we lay out upon the poor and afflicted and necessitous,

SERM. XXIII.

neceſſitous, will all be conſidered by GOD in the day of recompences, and moſt plentifully rewarded to us.

And ſurely no conſideration ought to be more prevalent to perſuade us to alms-deeds and charity to the poor, than that of a reſurrection to another life. Beſides the promiſes of this life which are made to works of charity, and there is not any grace or virtue whatſoever, which hath ſo many and ſo great promiſes of temporal bleſſings made to it in ſcripture as this grace of charity; I ſay, beſides the promiſes of this life, the great promiſe of eternal life is in ſcripture in a more eſpecial manner entail'd upon it. Luke xii. 33. "Give alms, (ſaith our SAVIOUR) "provide your ſelves bags which wax not old, a "treaſure in the heavens that faileth not;" and chap. xvi. ver. 9. "Make to your ſelves friends of "the mammon of unrighteouſneſs, that when ye "ſhall fail, they may receive you into everlaſting "habitations." And 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18, 19. "Charge them that are rich in this world, that "they be not high-minded, *&c.* that they do good, "that they be rich in good works, ready to diſtri-"bute, willing to communicate, laying up in ſtore "for themſelves a good foundation againſt the time "to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life;" the word θεμέλιον, which our tranſlation renders foundation according to the common uſe of it, ſeems in this place to have a more peculiar notion, and to ſignify the ſecurity that is given by a pledge, or by an inſtrument or obligation of contract for the performance of covenants. For beſides that the phraſe of "laying up in ſtore, or treaſuring up a "foun-

" foundation," seems to be a very odd jumbling of metaphors; this very word θεμέλιος almost necessarily requires this notion as it is used by the same apostle, in his second epistle to Timothy, chap. 2. ver. 19. where it is said, " the foundation of God " stands sure, having this seal," &c. a seal being very improper to strengthen a foundation, but very fit to confirm a covenant. And then surely it ought to be render'd, " the covenant of God remains firm, " having this seal." And so likewise in the forementioned text, the sense will be much more easy and current if we render it thus, " treasuring up, or " providing for themselves a good security or pledge " against the time to come;" I add pledge, because that anciently was the common way of security for things lent: besides that the apostle seems plainly to allude to that passage, Tobit iv. 8, 9. " If thou hast " abundance, give alms accordingly, &c. for thou " layest up a good treasure for thy self against the " day of necessity, θέμα γὰρ ἀγαθὸν θησαυρίζεις, for " thou treasurest up for thy self a good pledge;" to which this of the apostle exactly answers, ἀποθησαυρίζοντας ἑαυτοῖς θεμέλιον καλὸν, treasuring up, or providing for themselves a good pledge or security, &c. the sense however is plain, that the charity of alms is one of the best ways of securing our future happiness. SERM. XXIII.

And yet further to encourage us to abound in works of charity, the scripture tells us that proportionably to the degrees of our charity shall be the degrees of our reward; upon this consideration the apostle exhorts the Corinthians to be liberal in their charity, 2 Cor. ix. 6. " he that soweth sparingly

SERM. XXIII.

" ſhall reap ſparingly, but he that ſoweth bountifully " ſhall reap bountifully." So that whatever we lay out in this kind is to the greateſt advantage, and upon the beſt ſecurity; two conſiderations which uſe to be very prevalent with rich men to lay out their money.

We certainly do it to the greateſt advantage; becauſe GOD will conſider the very ſmalleſt thing that any of us do in this kind. He that ſhall give ſo much as " a cup of cold water to a diſciple, in the " name of a diſciple, ſhall not loſe his reward;" theſe laſt words, ſhall not loſe his reward, are a μείωσις, and ſignify much more than they ſeem to ſpeak, *viz.* that he ſhall have a very great reward, infinitely beyond the value of what he hath done.

And we do it likewiſe upon the beſt ſecurity; ſo Solomon aſſures us, Prov. xix. 17. " He that hath pity " upon the poor lendeth to the lord, and that which " he hath given will he pay him again:" and we may be confident of our ſecurity where GOD is ſurety; nay, he tells us that in this caſe he looks upon himſelf as principal, and that whatever we do in ways of mercy and charity to the poor he takes as done to himſelf. So our LORD hath told us, Matth. xxv. 40. and we ſhall hear the ſame from him again out of his own mouth when he ſhall appear in his majeſty to judge the world, " then the king ſhall " anſwer, and ſay unto them, verily I ſay unto you, " inaſmuch as ye have done it unto one of the leaſt " of theſe my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

And on the other ſide, the ſcripture no where paſſeth a more ſevere doom upon any ſort of perſons, than upon thoſe who have no bowels of compaſſion towards

towards their brethren in diſtreſs. That is a fearful ſentence indeed, which the apoſtle pronounceth upon ſuch perſons, Jam. ii. 13. "He ſhall have judgment without mercy that hath ſhewed no mercy." And this our SAVIOUR repreſents to us in a moſt ſolemn manner, in that lively deſcription which he makes of the judgment of the great day, Matth. xxv. 31. &c. "When the SON of man ſhall come in his "glory, and all the holy angels with him, then ſhall "he ſit upon the throne of his glory: and before "him ſhall be gathered all nations, and he ſhall ſe"parate them one from another, as a ſhepherd di"videth the ſheep from the goats. And he ſhall "ſet the ſheep on his right hand, but the goats on "the left. Then ſhall the king ſay unto them on "his right hand, Come, ye bleſſed of my father, in"herit the kingdom prepared for you before the "foundation of the world. For I was an hungred, "and ye gave me meat; I was thirſty, and ye gave "me drink; I was a ſtranger, and ye took me in; "naked, and ye clothed me; I was ſick, and ye "viſited me; I was in priſon, and ye came unto "me. Then ſhall he ſay alſo unto them on the left "hand, Depart from me, ye curſed, into everlaſting "fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I "was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat, &c. "And theſe ſhall go away into everlaſting puniſh"ment; but the righteous into life eternal." And if this be, as moſt certainly it is, a true and proper repreſentation of the proceſs of that day, then the great matter of enquiry will be, what works of charity and mercy have been done or neglected by us, and accordingly a ſentence of eternal happi-

SERM. XXIII.

SERM. XXIII.

ness or misery will be pass'd upon us: I was hungry, did ye feed me, or did ye not? I was naked, did ye clothe me, or did ye not? I was sick and in prison, did ye visit me, or did ye not? Not but that all the good or evil of our lives, in what kind soever, shall then be brought to account; but that our SAVIOUR did choose to instance particularly, and only in things of this nature, should methinks make a mighty impression upon us, and be a powerful consideration to oblige us to have a very peculiar regard to works of mercy and charity, and to make sure to abound in this grace; that when we shall appear before the great judge of the world, we may find that mercy from him, which we have shew'd to others, and which we shall all undoubtedly stand in need of in that day.

And among all our acts of charity, those which are done upon least probability and foresight of their meeting with any recompense in this world, either by way of real requital or of fame and reputation, as they are of all other most acceptable to GOD, so they will certainly have the most ample reward in another world. So our LORD hath assur'd us, and accordingly adviseth us, Luke xiv. 12, 13, 14. "When "thou makest a feast, invite not the rich, because "they will recompense thee again: but call the poor, "the maimed, the lame and the blind, for they "cannot recompense thee, but thou shalt be recom-"pensed at the resurrection of the just." If we be religious for worldly ends, and serve GOD, and do good to men, only in contemplation of some temporal advantage, we take up with present payment, and cut ourselves short of our future reward: of such,

faith

ſaith our LORD, "verily I ſay unto you, they have "their reward;" they are their own ſecurity, and have taken care to ſatisfy themſelves, and therefore are to expect nothing from GOD. But let us who call ourſelves chriſtians do ſomething for GOD, for which we have no hopes to be recompenſed in this world; that we may ſhew that we truſt GOD, and take his word, and dare venture upon the ſecurity of the next world, and that recompenſe which ſhall be made at the reſurrection of the juſt.

And how great and glorious that ſhall be, our SAVIOUR tells us immediately before my text. "They "that ſhall be accounted worthy to obtain that "world, and the reſurrection from the dead, they "can die no more, but they are equal to the angels, "and are the children of GOD, being the children "of the reſurrection."

If then we be heirs of ſuch glorious hopes, and believe that he who is the GOD of Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, will alſo be our GOD: let us live as it becomes the candidates of heaven, and the children of the reſurrection, and ſuch as verily believe another life after this, and hope one day to ſit down with Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of GOD.

And now that I have repreſented to you what encouragement there is to well-doing, and particularly to works of charity, from the conſideration of the bleſſed reward we ſhall certainly meet with at the reſurrection of the juſt; I ſhall crave your patience a little longer, whilſt I propoſe to you one of the faireſt examples of this kind which either this, or perhaps any other age, could eaſily preſent us withal:

I mean

SERM. XXIII.

I mean our deceaſed brother to whom we are now paying our laſt ſolemn reſpects, the reverend Mr. THOMAS GOUGE; the worthy ſon of a reverend and learned divine of this city, Dr. William Gouge; who was miniſter of this pariſh of Black-Friers ſix and forty years; he died in 1653, and ſtill lives in the memory of many here preſent.

I muſt confeſs that I am no friend to funeral panegyricks, where there is nothing of extraordinary worth and merit in the party commended to give occaſion and foundation for them: in ſuch caſes, as praiſes are not due to the dead, ſo they may be of ill conſequence to the living: not only by bringing thoſe of our profeſſion that make a practice of it, under the ſuſpicion of officious and mercenary flattery, but likewiſe by encouraging men to hope that they alſo may be well ſpoken of, and even ſainted when they are dead, though they ſhould have done little or no good in their life: but yet on the other hand, to commend thoſe excellent perſons the virtues of whoſe lives have been bright and exemplary, is not only a piece of juſtice due to the dead, but an act of great charity to the living, ſetting a pattern of well-doing before our eyes, very apt and powerful to incite and encourage us to go and do likewiſe.

Upon both theſe conſiderations, firſt to do right to the memory of ſo good a man, and then in hopes that the example may prove fruitful and have a conſiderable effect upon others to beget the like goodneſs and charity in them, I ſhall endeavour, in as narrow a compaſs as may be, to give you the juſt character of this truly pious and charitable man, and by ſetting his life in a true light to recommend with all the advantage

vantage I can ſo excellent a pattern to your imitation. SERM. XXIII.

He was born at Bow near Stratford in the county of Middleſex the 19th day of September 1605. He was bred at Eaton ſchool, and from thence choſen to King's college in Cambridge, being about 20 years of age, in the year 1626. After he had finiſh'd the courſe of his ſtudies, and taken his degrees, he left the univerſity and his fellowſhip, being preſented to the living of Colſden near Croyden in Surrey, where he continued about two or three years; and from thence was remov'd to St. Sepulchres in London, in the year 1638, and the year after thinking fit to change his condition match'd into a very worthy and ancient family, marrying one of the daughters of Sir Robert Darcy.

Being thus ſettled in this large and populous pariſh, he did with great ſolicitude and pains diſcharge all the parts of a vigilant and faithful miniſter, for about the ſpace of twenty-four years. For beſides his conſtant and weekly labour of preaching, he was very diligent and charitable in viſiting the ſick, and miniſtring not only ſpiritual counſel and comfort to them, but likewiſe liberal relief to the wants and neceſſities of thoſe that were poor and deſtitute of means to help themſelves in that condition. He did alſo every morning throughout the year catechiſe in the church, eſpecially the poorer ſort who were generally moſt ignorant; and to encourage them to come thither to be inſtructed by him, he did once a week diſtribute money among them, not upon a certain day, but changing it on purpoſe as he thought good, that he might thereby oblige them to be conſtantly preſent;

SERM. XXIII.

preſent; theſe were chiefly the more aged poor, who being paſt labour had leiſure enough to attend upon this exerciſe. As for the other ſort of poor who were able to work for their living, he ſet them at work upon his own charge, buying flax and hemp for them to ſpin, and what they ſpun he took off their hands, paying them for their work, and then got it wrought into cloth, and ſold it as he could, chiefly among his friends, himſelf bearing the whole loſs. And this was a very wiſe and well choſen way of charity, and in the good effect of it a much greater charity than if he had given theſe very perſons freely and for nothing ſo much as they earned by their work; becauſe by this means he took many off from begging, and thereby reſcued them at once from two of the moſt dangerous temptations of this world, idleneſs and poverty; and by degrees reclaimed them to a virtuous and induſtrious courſe of life, which enabled them afterwards to live without being beholden to the charity of others.

And this courſe ſo happily devis'd and begun by Mr. Gouge in his own pariſh was I think that which gave the firſt hint to that worthy and uſeful citizen Mr. Thomas Firmin of a much larger deſign, which hath been proſecuted by him for ſome years with that vigour and good ſucceſs in this city, that many hundreds of poor children, and others who liv'd idle before, unprofitable both to themſelves and the publick, are continually maintained at work, and taught to earn their own livelihood much in the ſame way: he being, by the generous aſſiſtance and charity of many worthy and well-diſpoſed Perſons of all

all ranks, enabled to bear the unavoidable loſs and charge of ſo vaſt an undertaking; and by his own forward inclination to charity, and his unwearied diligence and activity, extraordinarily fitted to ſuſtain and go through the incredible pains of it. SERM. XXIII.

But to return to our deceaſed friend; concerning whom I muſt content my ſelf to paſs over many things worthy to be remembred of him, and to ſpeak only of thoſe virtues of his which were more eminent and remarkable.

Of his piety towards God, which is the neceſſary foundation of all other graces and virtues, I ſhall only ſay this, that it was great and exemplary, but yet very ſtill and quiet, without ſtir and noiſe, and much more in ſubſtance and reality, than in ſhew and oſtentation; and did not conſiſt in cenſuring and finding fault with others, but in the due care and government of his own life and actions, and in "exerci- "ſing himſelf continually to have a conſcience void of "offence toward God and toward men;" in which he was ſuch a proficient, that even after a long acquaintance and familiar converſation with him, it was not eaſy to obſerve any thing that might deſerve blame.

He particularly excell'd in the more peculiar virtues of converſation, in modeſty, humility, meekneſs, cheerfulneſs, and in kindneſs and charity towards all men.

So great was his modeſty, that it never appeared either by word or action, that he put any value upon himſelf. This I have often obſerved in him, that the charities which were procured chiefly by his application and induſtry, when he had occaſion to

3.

SERM XXIII.

give an account of them, he would rather impute to any one who had but the leaſt hand and part in the obtaining of them, than aſſume any thing of it to himſelf. Another inſtance of his modeſty was, that when he had quitted his living of St. Sepulchre's upon ſome diſſatisfaction about the terms of conformity, he willingly forbore preaching, ſaying there was no need of him here in London where there were ſo many worthy miniſters, and that he thought he might do as much or more good in another way which could give no offence. Only in the latter years of his life, being better ſatisfied in ſome things he had doubted of before, he had licence from ſome of the biſhops to preach in Wales in his progreſs; which he was the more willing to do, becauſe in ſome places he ſaw great need of it, and he thought he might do it with greater advantage among the poor people, who were the more likely to regard his inſtructions, being recommended by his great charity ſo well known to them, and of which they had ſo long had the experience and benefit. But where there was no ſuch need, he was very well contented to hear others perſuade men to goodneſs, and to practiſe it himſelf.

He was clothed with humility, and had in a moſt eminent degree that "ornament of a meek and quiet "ſpirit, (which St. Peter ſays) is in the ſight of "GOD of ſo great price:" ſo that there was not the leaſt appearance either of pride or paſſion in any of his words or actions. He was not only free from anger and bitterneſs, but from all affected gravity and moroſeneſs. His converſation was affable and pleaſant; he had a wonderful ſerenity of mind and evenneſs

of

of temper, visible in his very countenance; he was hardly ever merry, but never melancholy or sad; and for any thing I could discern, after a long and intimate acquaintance with him, he was upon all occasions and accidents perpetually the same; always cheerful, and always kind; of a disposition ready to embrace and oblige all men; allowing others to differ from him, even in opinions that were very dear to him; and provided men did but fear God and work righteousness, he lov'd them heartily, how distant soever from him in judgment about things less necessary; in all which he is very worthy to be a pattern for men of all persuasions whatsoever. SERM. XXIII.

But that virtue which of all other shone brightest in him, and was his most proper and peculiar character, was his cheerful and unwearied diligence in acts of pious charity. In this he left far behind him all that ever I knew, and, as I said before, had a singular sagacity and prudence in devising the most effectual ways of doing good, and in managing and disposing his charity to the best purposes, and to the greatest extent; always, if it were possible, making it to serve some end of piety and religion; as the instructions of poor children in the principles of religion, and furnishing grown persons that were ignorant with the bible and other good books; strictly obliging those to whom he gave them to a diligent reading of them, and when he had opportunity exacting of them an account how they had profited by them.

In his occasional alms to the poor, in which he was very free and bountiful, the relief he gave them was always mingled with good counsel, and as great

SERM. XXIII.

a tenderneſs and compaſſion for their ſouls as bodies; which very often attained the good effect it was likely to have, the one making way for the other with ſo much advantage, and men being very apt to follow the good advice of thoſe, who gave them in hand ſo ſenſible a pledge and teſtimony of their goodwill to them.

This kind of charity muſt needs be very expenſive to him, but he had a plentiful eſtate ſettled upon him, and left him by his father, and he laid it out as liberally in the moſt prudent and effectual ways of charity he could think of, and upon ſuch perſons as, all circumſtances conſidered, he judged to be the fitteſt and moſt proper objects of it.

For about nine or ten years laſt paſt he did, as is well known to many here preſent, almoſt wholly apply his charity to Wales, becauſe there he judged was moſt occaſion for it: And becauſe this was a very great work, he did not only lay out upon it whatever he could ſpare out of his own eſtate, but employ'd his whole time and pains to excite and engage the charity of others for his aſſiſtance in it.

And in this he had two excellent deſigns. One, to have poor children brought up to read and write, and to be carefully inſtructed in the principles of religion: the other, to furniſh perſons of grown age, the poor eſpecially, with the neceſſary helps and means of knowledge, as the bible, and other books of piety and devotion, in their own language; to which end he procured the church catechiſm, the practice of piety, and that beſt of books the whole duty of man, beſides ſeveral other pious and uſeful treatiſes, ſome of them to be tranſlated into the Welch

Welch tongue, and great numbers of all of them to be printed, and ſent down to the chief towns in Wales, to be ſold at eaſy rates to thoſe that were able to buy them, and to be freely given to thoſe that were not. SERM. XXIII.

And in both theſe deſigns, through the bleſſing of God upon his unwearied endeavours, he found very great ſucceſs. For by the large and bountiful contributions which chiefly by his induſtry and prudent application were obtained from charitable perſons of all ranks and conditions, from the nobility and gentry of Wales and the neighbouring counties, and ſeveral of that quality in and about London; from divers of the right reverend biſhops, and of the clergy; and from that perpetual fountain of charity the city of London, led on and encouraged by the moſt bountiful example of the right honourable the lord mayor and the court of aldermen; to all which he conſtantly added two thirds of his own eſtate, which as I have been credibly informed was two hundred pounds a year; I ſay, by all theſe together there were every year eight hundred, ſometimes a thouſand poor children educated as I ſaid before; and by this example ſeveral of the moſt conſiderable towns of Wales were excited to bring up at their own charge the like number of poor children, in the like manner, and under his inſpection and care.

He likewiſe gave very great numbers of the books above-mentioned both in the Welch and Engliſh tongues to the poorer ſort, ſo many as were unable to buy them and willing to read them. But which was the greateſt work of all, and amounted indeed to a mighty

SERM. XXIII.

mighty charge, he procured a new and very fair impreſſion of the bible and liturgy of the church of England in the Welch tongue (the former impreſſion being ſpent, and hardly twenty of them to be had in all London) to the number of eight thouſand; one thouſand whereof were freely given to the poor, and the reſt ſent to the principal cities and towns in Wales to be ſold to the rich at very reaſonable and low rates, viz. at four ſhillings apiece well bound and claſped; which was much cheaper than any Engliſh Bible was ever ſold that was of ſo fair a print and paper: a work of that charge, that it was not likely to have been done any other way; and for which this age, and perhaps the next, will have great cauſe to thank GOD on his behalf.

In theſe good works he employed all his time and care and pains, and his whole heart was in them; ſo that he was very little affected with any thing elſe, and ſeldom either minded or knew any thing of the ſtrange occurrences of this troubleſome and buſy age, ſuch as I think are hardly to be paralleſ'd in any other. Or if he did mind them, he ſcarce ever ſpoke any thing about them. For this was the buſineſs he laid to heart, and knowing it to be ſo much and ſo certainly the will of his heavenly father, it was his meat and drink to be doing of it: and the good ſucceſs he had in it was a continual feaſt to him, and gave him a perpetual ſerenity both of mind and countenance. His great love and zeal for this work made all the pains and difficulties of it ſeem nothing to him: he would riſe early and ſit up late, and continued the ſame diligence and induſtry to the laſt, though he was in the threeſcore and ſeventeenth

teenth year of his age. And that he might manage the distribution of this great charity with his own hands, and see the good effect of it with his own eyes, he always once, but usually twice a year, at his own charge travelled over a great part of Wales, none of the best countries to travel in: but for the love of God and men he endured all that, together with the extremity of heat and cold (which in their several seasons are both very great there) not only with patience, but with pleasure. So that all things considered there have not, since the primitive times of Christianity, been many among the sons of men to whom that glorious character of the Son of God might be better applied, that he went about doing good. And Wales may as worthily boast of this truly apostolical man as of their famous St. David; who was also very probably a good man, as those times of ignorance and superstition went. But his goodness is so disguised by their fabulous legends and stories which give us the account of him, that it is not easy to discover it. Indeed ridiculous miracles in abundance are reported of him; as, that upon occasion of a great number of people resorting from all parts to hear him preach, for the greater advantage of his being heard, a mountain all on a sudden rose up miraculously under his feet, and his voice was extended to that degree that he might be distinctly heard for two or three miles round about. Such phantastical miracles as these make up a great part of his history. And admitting all these to be true (which a wise man would be loth to do) our departed friend had that which is much greater and more excellent than all these, a fervent charity to God

and

and men; which is more than to ſpeak (as they would make us believe St. David did) with the tongue of men and angels, more than to raiſe or remove mountains.

And now methinks it is pity ſo good a deſign ſo happily proſecuted ſhould fall and die with this good man. And it is now under deliberation, if poſſible, ſtill to continue and carry it on, and a very worthy and charitable perſon pitched upon for that purpoſe, who is willing to undertake that part which he that is gone performed ſo well: But this will depend upon the continuance of the former charities and the concurrence of thoſe worthy and well-diſpoſed perſons in Wales to contribute their part as formerly; which I perſuade my ſelf they will cheerfully do.

I will add but one thing more concerning our deceaſed brother, that though he meddled not at all in our preſent heats and differences as a party, having much better things to mind; yet as a looker-on he did very ſadly lament them, and for ſeveral of the laſt years of his life he continued in the communion of our church, and, as he himſelf told me, thought himſelf obliged in conſcience ſo to do.

He died in the 77th year of his age, October 29, 1681. It ſo pleaſed GOD that his death was very ſudden; and ſo ſudden; that in all probability he himſelf hardly perceived it when it happened, for he died in his ſleep; ſo that we may ſay of him as it is ſaid of David, "after he had ſerved his gene-"ration according to the will of GOD, he fell aſleep."

I confeſs that a ſudden death is generally undeſirable, and therefore with reaſon we pray againſt it; becauſe ſo very few are ſufficiently prepared for it: but

but to him, the constant employment of whose life was the best preparation for death that was possible, no death could be sudden; nay, it was rather a favour and blessing to him, because by how much the more sudden so much the more easy: as if GOD had designed to begin the reward of the great pains of his life in an easy death. And indeed it was rather a translation than a death; and, saving that his body was left behind, what was said of Enoch may not unfitly be applied to this pious and good man with respect to the suddenness of his change; "he "walked with GOD, and was not, for GOD took "him."

And GOD grant that we who survive may all of us sincerely endeavour to tread in the steps of his exemplary piety and charity; of his labour of love, his unwearied diligence and patient continuance in doing good, that we may meet with that encouraging commendation which he hath already received from the mouth of our LORD, "Well done, good "and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy "LORD."

"Now the GOD of peace that brought again from "the dead our LORD JESUS CHRIST, that great "shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the "everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every "good work to do his will, working in you al-"ways that which is pleasing in his sight, through "JESUS CHRIST; to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON XXIV.

Preached at the funeral of the reverend *Benjamin Whichcot*, D. D. *May* 24, 1683.

---

2 COR. v. 6.

Wherefore we are always confident, knowing that whilſt we are at home in the body, we are abſent from the LORD.

SERM. XXIV.

THESE words contain one of the chief grounds of encouragement which the chriſtian religion gives us againſt the fear of death. For our clearer underſtanding of them it will be requiſite to conſider the context, looking back as far as the beginning of the chapter, where the apoſtle purſues the argument of the foregoing chapter; which was to comfort and encourage chriſtians under their afflictions and ſufferings from this conſideration, that theſe did but prepare the way for a greater and more glorious reward; "Our "light affliction, which is but for a moment, work-"eth for us a far more exceeding and eternal "weight of glory." And ſuppoſe the worſt, that theſe ſufferings ſhould extend to death, there is comfort for us likewiſe in this caſe, ver. 1. of this chapter, "For we know that if our earthly houſe "of this tabernacle were diſſolved, we have a build-"ing of GOD, &c. If our earthly houſe of this ta-

"bernacle;

" bernacle;" he calls our body an earthly houſe, and that we may not look upon it as a certain abode and fixed habitation, he doth by way of correction of himſelf add, that it is but a tabernacle or tent which muſt ſhortly be taken down: and when it is, " we ſhall have a building of GOD, a " houſe not made with hands, eternal in the hea- " vens." This is a deſcription of our heavenly habitation, in oppoſition to our earthly houſe or tabernacle: it is a building of GOD, not like thoſe houſes or tabernacles which men build, and which are liable to decay and diſſolution, to be taken down, or to fall down of themſelves, for ſuch are thoſe houſes of clay which we dwell in, " whoſe founda- " tions are in the duſt," but an habitation prepared by GOD himſelf, " a houſe not made with " hands;" that which is the immediate work of GOD, being in ſcripture oppoſed to that which is made with hands, and effected by humane concurrence, and by natural means: and being the immediate work of GOD, as it is excellent, ſo it is laſting and durable, which no earthly thing is; " eternal " in the heavens," that is eternal and heavenly.

SERM. XXIV.

" For in this we groan earneſtly;" that is, while we are in this body we groan by reaſon of the preſſures and afflictions of it. " Deſiring to be clothed " upon with our houſe which is from heaven: if ſo " be that being clothed we ſhall not be found na- " ked. Deſiring to be clothed upon," that is, we could wiſh not to put off theſe bodies, not to be ſtripp'd of them by death, but to be of the number of thoſe who at the coming of our LORD without the putting off theſe bodies ſhall be changed and

SERM. XXIV.

clothed upon with their houſe which is from heaven, and without dying be inveſted with thoſe ſpiritual and glorious and heavenly bodies which men ſhall have at the reſurrection.

This I doubt not is the apoſtle's meaning in theſe words; in which he ſpeaks according to a common opinion among the diſciples, grounded (as St. John tells us) upon a miſtake of our SAVIOUR's words concerning him, "If I will that he tarry till I "come:" upon which St. John tells us that "there "went a ſaying among the brethren that that diſ- "ciple ſhould not die;" that is, that he ſhould live till CHRIST's coming to judgment, and then be changed; and conſequently that CHRIST would come to judgment before the end of that age. Suitable to this common opinion among chriſtians the apoſtle here ſays, "in this we groan earneſtly, de- "ſiring to be clothed upon with our houſe which is "from heaven, if ſo be that being clothed we ſhall "not be found naked." It hath puzzled interpreters what to make of this paſſage, and well it might; for whatever be meant by being clothed, how can they that are clothed be found naked? but I think it is very clear that our tranſlators have not attained the true ſenſe of this paſſage, Εἴγε καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι, οὐ γυμνοὶ εὑρεθησόμεθα, which is moſt naturally rendred thus, "if ſo be we ſhall be found clothed, and "not naked:" That is, if the coming of CHRIST ſhall find us in the body and not diveſted of it; if at CHRIST's coming to judgment we ſhall be found alive and not dead. And then the ſenſe of the whole is very clear and current; we are deſirous to be clothed upon with our houſe from heaven (that is, with

with our ſpiritual and immortal bodies) if ſo be it ſhall ſo happen that at the coming of CHRIST we ſhall be found alive in theſe bodies, and not ſtripp'd of them before by death. And then it follows, " For we that are in this tabernacle do groan being " burdened:" (that is, with the afflictions and preſſures of this life) " not that we would be unclothed," (that is, not that we deſire by death to be diveſted of theſe bodies) " but clothed upon" (that is, if GOD ſee it good we had rather be found alive, and changed, and without putting off theſe bodies have immortality as it were ſuperinduced) " that ſo mor- " tality might be ſwallowed up of life." The plain ſenſe is, that he rather deſires (if it may be) to be of the number of thoſe who ſhall be found alive at the coming of CHRIST, and have this mortal and corruptible body, while they are clothed with it, changed into a ſpiritual and incorruptible body, without the pain and terror of dying: of which immediate tranſlation into heaven without the painful divorce of ſoul and body by death, Enoch and Elias were examples in the old teſtament. SERM. XXIV.

It follows, ver. 5. " Now he that hath wrought " us for the ſelf-ſame thing is GOD:" that is, it is he who hath fitted and prepared us for this glorious change: " who alſo hath given us the earneſt of the " SPIRIT." The SPIRIT is frequently in ſcripture called the witneſs, and ſeal, and earneſt of our future happineſs, and bleſſed reſurrection or change of theſe vile and earthly bodies into ſpiritual and heavenly bodies. For as the reſurrection of CHRIST from the dead by the power of the HOLY GHOST is the great proof and evidence of immortality; ſo the SPI-

RIT

SERM. XXIV.

RIT of him that raiſed up JESUS from the dead dwelling in us, is the pledge and earneſt of our reſurrection to an immortal life.

From all which the apoſtle concludes in the words of the text, "Therefore we are always confident," that is, we are always of good courage againſt the fear of death, "knowing that whilſt we are at "home in the body, we are abſent from the LORD," ἐνδημοῦντες ἐν τῷ σώματι, which may better be rendred "whilſt we converſe or ſojourn in the body," than 'whilſt we are at home;' becauſe the deſign of the apoſtle is to ſhew that the body is not our houſe but our tabernacle; and that whilſt we are in the body we are not at home, but pilgrims and ſtrangers. And this notion the heathens had of our preſent life and condition in this world. *Ex vita diſcedo* (ſaith Tully) *tanquam ex hoſpitio non tanquam ex domo; commorandi enim natura diverſorium nobis, non habitandi locum dedit.* "We go out of this life as it were "from an inn, and not from our home; nature having deſigned it to us as a place to ſojourn but not "to dwell in."

"We are abſent from the LORD;" that is, we are detained from the bleſſed ſight and enjoyment of GOD, and kept out of the poſſeſſion of that happineſs which makes heaven.

So that the apoſtle makes an immediate oppoſition between our continuance in the body, and our bliſsful enjoyment of GOD; and lays it down for a certain truth, that whilſt we remain in the body we are detained from our happineſs, and that ſo ſoon as ever we leave the body we ſhall be admitted into it, "knowing that while we converſe in the body we

"are

" are abſent from the LORD." And ver. 8, " we " are willing rather to be abſent from the body and " preſent with the LORD;" intimating that ſo ſoon as we quit theſe bodies we ſhall be admitted to the bleſſed ſight and enjoyment of GOD. SERM. XXIV.

My deſign from this text is to draw ſome uſeful corollaries or concluſions from this aſſertion of the apoſtle, That whilſt we are in theſe bodies we are detained from our happineſs; and that ſo ſoon as ever we depart out of them we ſhall be admitted to the poſſeſſion and enjoyment of it. And they are theſe,

1. The aſſertion ſhews us the vanity and falſhood of that opinion, or rather dream, concerning the ſleep of the ſoul from the time of death 'till the general reſurrection. This is chiefly grounded upon that frequent metaphor in ſcripture by which death is reſembled to ſleep, and thoſe that are dead are ſaid to be fallen aſleep. But this metaphor is no where in ſcripture, that I know of, applied to the ſoul, but to the body reſting in the grave in order to its being awakened and raiſed up at the reſurrection. And thus it is frequently uſed with expreſs reference to the body, Dan. xii. 2. " Many of them that ſleep " in the duſt of the earth ſhall awake." Matth. xxvii. 52. " And the graves were opened, and many bo- " dies of ſaints which ſlept aroſe," Acts xiii. 36. " David, after he had ſerved his own generation by " the will of GOD, fell on ſleep, and was laid unto " his fathers, and ſaw corruption;" which ſurely can no otherwiſe be underſtood than of his body. 1 Cor. xv. 20. " Now is CHRIST riſen from the dead, and " become the firſt-fruits of them that ſlept;" that

is,

SERM. XXIV.

is, the resurrection of his body is the earnest and assurance that ours also shall be raised. And ver. 51. "We shall not all sleep, but shall all be changed;" where the apostle certainly speaks both of the death and change of these corruptible bodies. 1 Thess. iv. 14. "If we believe that JESUS died and rose again, "even so them also that sleep in JESUS shall GOD "bring with him;" that is, the bodies of those that died in the LORD shall be raised, and accompany him at his coming. So that it is the body which is said in scripture to sleep, and not the soul. For that is utterly inconsistent with the apostle's assertion here in the text, that "while we are in the body we are "absent from the LORD," and that so soon as we depart out of the body we shall be present with the LORD. For surely to be with the LORD must signify a state of happiness, which sleep is not, but only of inactivity: besides, that the apostle's argument would be very flat, and it would be but a cold encouragement against the fear of death, that so soon as we are dead we shall fall asleep and become insensible. But the apostle useth it as an argument why we should be willing to die as soon as GOD pleaseth, and the sooner the better, because so soon as we quit these bodies we shall be present with the LORD, that is, admitted to the blissful sight and enjoyment of him; and while we abide in the body we are detained from our happiness: but if our souls shall sleep as well as our bodies 'till the general resurrection, it is all one whether we continue in the body or not, as to any happiness we shall enjoy in the mean time; which is directly contrary to the main scope of the apostle's argument.

2. This

SERM. XXIV.

2. This assertion of the apostle's doth perfectly conclude against the feigned purgatory of the church of Rome; which supposeth the far greater number of true and faithful christians, of those who die in the LORD, and have obtained eternal redemption by him from hell not to pass immediately into a state of happiness, but to be detained in the suburbs of hell in extremity of torment (equal to that of hell for degree, though not for duration) 'till their souls be purged, and the guilt of temporal punishments, which they are liable to, be some way or other paid off and discharged. They suppose indeed some very few holy persons (especially those who suffer martyrdom) to be so perfect at their departure out of the body as to pass immediately into heaven, because they need no purgation: but most christians they suppose to die so imperfect that they stand in need of being purged; and according to the degree of their imperfection are to be detain'd a shorter or a longer time in purgatory.

But now, besides that there is no text in scripture from whence any such state can probably be concluded (as is acknowledged by many learned men of the church of Rome) and even that text which they have most insisted upon ("they shall be saved, yet so as by fire") is given up by them as insufficient to conclude the thing. Estius is very glad to get off it, by saying there is nothing in it against purgatory: why? no body pretends that, but we might reasonably expect that there should be something for it in a text which hath been so often produced and urged by them for the proof of it. I say, besides that there is nothing in scripture for purgatory, there

3.

SERM. XXIV.

are a great many things againſt it, and utterly inconſiſtent with it. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, which was deſigned to repreſent to us the different ſtates of good and bad men in another world, there is not the leaſt intimation of purgatory, but that good men paſs immediately into a ſtate of happineſs, and bad men into a place of torment. And St. John, Rev. xiv. 13. pronounceth all that die in the LORD happy, becauſe "they reſt from "their labours;" which they cannot be ſaid to do who are in a ſtate of great anguiſh and torment, as thoſe are ſuppoſed to be who are in purgatory.

But above all, this reaſoning of St. Paul is utterly inconſiſtent with any imagination of ſuch a ſtate. For he encourageth all chriſtians in general againſt the fear of death from the conſideration of that happy ſtate they ſhould immediately paſs into, by being admitted into the preſence of GOD; which ſurely is not purgatory. "We are of good courage "(ſays he) and willing rather to be abſent from the "body:" and great reaſon we ſhould be ſo, if ſo ſoon as we leave the body we are preſent with the LORD. But no man ſure would be glad to leave the body to go into a place of exquiſite and extreme torment, which they tell us is the caſe of moſt chriſtians when they die. And what can be more unreaſonable, than to make the apoſtle to uſe an argument to comfort all chriſtians againſt the fear of death which concerns but very few in compariſon? So that if the apoſtle's reaſoning be good, that while we are in this life we are detained from our happineſs, and ſo ſoon as we depart this life we paſs immediately into it, and therefore death is deſirable

ble to all good men: I ſay, if this reaſoning be good, it is very clear that St. Paul knew nothing of the doctrine now taught in the church of Rome concerning purgatory; becauſe that is utterly inconſiſtent with what he expreſly aſſerts in this chapter, and quite takes away the force of his whole argument. SERM. XXIV.

3. To encourage us againſt the fear of death. And this is the concluſion which the apoſtle makes from this conſideration. "Therefore (ſays he) we are of "good courage, knowing that whilſt we converſe "in the body we are abſent from the LORD." There is in us a natural love of life, and a natural horrour and dread of death; ſo that our ſpirits are apt to ſhrink at the thoughts of the approach of it. But this fear may very much be mitigated and even overruled by reaſon and the conſiderations of Religion. For death is not ſo dreadful in itſelf, as with regard to the conſequences of it: and thoſe will be as we are, comfortable and happy to the good, but diſmal and miſerable to the wicked. So that the only true antidote againſt the fear of death is the hopes of a better life; and the only firm ground of theſe hopes is the mercy of GOD in JESUS CHRIST, upon our due preparation for another world by repentance and a holy life. For the ſting of death is ſin; and when that is taken away the terrour and bitterneſs of death is paſt: and then death is ſo far from being dreadful, that in reaſon it is extremely deſirable; becauſe it lets us into a better ſtate, ſuch as only deſerves the name of life. *Hi vivunt qui ex corporum vinculis tanquam è carcere evolaverunt: veſtra vero quæ dicitur vita, mors eſt.* "They truly live (could a heathen ſay)

SERM. XXIV.

" who have made their escape out of this prison of " the body; but that which men commonly call life " is rather death than life." To live indeed, is to be well, and to be happy; and that we shall never be 'till we are got beyond the grave.

4. This consideration should comfort us under the loss and death of friends, which certainly is one of the greatest grievances and troubles of humane life. For if they be fit for GOD, and go to him when they die, they are infinitely happier than it was possible for them to have been in this world; and the trouble of their absence from us is fully balanced by their being present with the LORD. For why should we lament the end of that life which we are assured is the beginning of immortality? One reason of our trouble for the loss of friends is because we loved them: but it is no sign of our love to them to grudge and repine at their happiness. But we hoped to have enjoyed them longer: be it so; yet why should we be troubled that they are happy sooner than we expected? But they are parted from us, and the thought of this is grievous: but yet the consideration of their being parted for a while is not near so sad, as the hopes of a happy meeting again, never to be parted any more, is comfortable and joyful. So that the greater our love to them was, the less should be our grief for them, when we consider that they are happy, and that they are safe; past all storms, all the troubles and temptations of this life, and out of the reach of all harm and danger for ever. But though the reason of our duty in this case be very plain, yet the practice of it is very difficult; and when all is said, natural affection will have its course: and even

after

after our judgment is satisfied, it will require some time to still and quiet our passions. SERM. XXIV.

5. This consideration should wean us from the love of life; and make us not only contented, but willing and glad to leave this world, whenever it shall please God to call us out of it. This inference the apostle makes, ver. 8. "We are confident, I say, "and willing rather to be absent from the body, "and present with the Lord." Though there were no state of immortality after this life, yet methinks we should not desire to live always in this world. *Habet natura* (says Tully) *ut aliarum rerum, sic vivendi modum:* "As nature hath set bounds and mea-"sures to other things, so likewise to life;" of which men should know when they have enough, and not covet so much of it 'till they be tired and cloyed with it. If there were no other inconvenience in long life, this is a great one, that in a long course of time we unavoidably see a great many things which we would not; our own misfortunes and the calamities of others; publick confusions and distractions; the loss of friends and relations; or which is worse, their misery; or which is worst of all, their miscarriage: especially, a very infirm and tedious old age is very undesirable: for who would desire to live long uneasy to himself and troublesome to others? It is time for us to be willing to die, when we cannot live with the good-will even of our friends: when those who ought to love us best think much that we live so long, and can hardly forbear to give us broad signs that they are weary of our company. In such a case a man would almost be contented to die out of civility; and not choose to make any long stay where he

SERM. XXIV.

he sees that his company is not acceptable. If we think we can be welcome to a better place, and to a more delightful society, why should we desire to thrust ourselves any longer upon an ill-natured world, upon those who have much ado to refrain from telling us that our room is better than our company?

Some indeed have a very happy and vigorous old age, and the taper of life burns clear in them to the last: their understandings are good, their memories and senses tolerable, their humour pleasant, and their conversation acceptable, and their relations kind and respectful to them. But this is a rare felicity, and which seldom happens but to those who have lived wisely and virtuously, and by a religious and regular course of life have preserved some of their best spirits to the last, and have not by vice and extravagance drawn off life to the dregs, and left nothing to be enjoyed but infirmities and ill humours, guilt and repentance: but on the contrary have prudently laid up some considerable comforts and supports for themselves against this gloomy day; having stored their minds with wisdom and knowledge, and taken care to secure to themselves the comfortable reflexions of an useful and well-spent life, and the favour and loving-kindness of God which is better than life itself. But generally the extremities of old age are very peevish and querulous, and a declining and falling back to the weak and helpless condition of infancy and childhood. And yet less care is commonly taken to please aged persons, and less kindness shewed to them (unless it be in expectation of receiving greater from them) than to children: because these are cherished in hopes, the others in despair of their

their growing better. So that if God ſee it good it is not deſirable to live to try nature, and the kindneſs and good-will of our relations to the utmoſt. SERM. XXIV.

Nay there is reaſon enough why we ſhould be contented to die in any age of our life. If we are young, we have taſted the beſt of it: if in our middle age, we have not only enjoyed all that is deſirable of life, but almoſt all that is tolerable: if we are old, we are come to the dregs of it, and do but ſee the ſame things over and over again, and continually with leſs pleaſure.

Eſpecially if we conſider the happineſs from which we are all this while detained. This life is but our infancy and childhood in compariſon of the manly pleaſures and enjoyments of the other ſtate. And why ſhould we deſire to be always children; and to linger here below to play the fools yet a little longer? In this ſenſe that high expreſſion of the poet is true,

— *Dii celant homines, ut vivere durent,*
Quàm ſit dulce mori ——

"The gods conceal from men the ſweetneſs of "dying, to make them patient and contented to "live."

This life is wholly in order to the other. Do but make ſure to live well, and there is no need of living long. To the purpoſe of preparation for another world, the beſt life is the longeſt. Some live a great pace, and by continual diligence and induſtry in ſerving God and doing good, do really diſpatch more of the buſineſs of life in a few years, than others do in a whole age; who go ſuch a ſantering pace towards heaven, as if they were in no haſte

to

SERM. XXIV.

to get thither. But if we were always prepared we ſhould rejoice at the proſpect of our end; as thoſe who have been long toſt at ſea are overjoyed at the ſight of land.

I have now done with my text, but have another ſubject to ſpeak of; that excellent man in whoſe place I now ſtand; whom we all knew, and whom all that knew him well did highly eſteem and reverence. He was born in Shropſhire of a worthy and ancient family, the 11th of March, 1609, was the ſixth ſon of his father: and being bred up to learning, and very capable of it, was ſent to the univerſity of Cambridge, and planted there in Emanuel-college, where he was choſen fellow, and was an excellent tutor and inſtructor of youth, and bred up many perſons of quality, and others, who afterwards proved uſeful and eminent; as many perhaps as any tutor of that time.

About the age of four or five and thirty he was made provoſt of King's-college; where he was a moſt vigilant and prudent governor, a great encourager of learning and good order, and by his careful and wiſe management of the eſtate of the college, brought it into a very flouriſhing condition, and left it ſo.

It cannot be denied (nor am I much concerned to diſſemble it) that here he poſſeſs'd another man's place, who by the iniquity of the times was wrongfully ejected; I mean Dr. Collins the famous and learned divinity-profeſſor of that univerſity. During whoſe life (and he lived many years after) by the free conſent of the college there were two ſhares out of the common dividend allotted to the provoſt, one whereof

whereof was constantly paid to Dr. Collins, as if he had been still provost. To this Dr. Whichcot did not only give his consent (without which the thing could not have been done) but was very forward for the doing of it, tho' hereby he did not only considerably lessen his own profit, but likewise incur no small censure and hazard, as the times then were. And lest this had not been kindness enough to that worthy person whose place he possessed, in his last will he left his son, Sir John Collins, a legacy of one hundred pounds.

And as he was not wanting either in respect or real kindness to the rightful owner, so neither did he stoop to do any thing unworthy to obtain that place; for he never took the covenant: and not only so, but by the particular friendship and interest which he had in some of the chief visitors, he prevailed to have the greatest part of the fellows of that college exempted from that imposition; and preserved them in their places by that means. And to the fellows that were ejected by the visitors, he likewise freely consented that their full dividend for that year should be paid them, even after they were ejected. Among these was the reverend and ingenious Dr. Charles Mason; upon whom after he was ejected, the college did confer a good living which then fell in their gift, with the consent of the provost, who, knowing him to be a worthy man, was content to run the hazard of the displeasure of those times.

So that I hope none will be hard upon him, that he was contented upon such terms to be in a capacity to do good in bad times.

3.

SERM. XXIV.

For, besides his care of the college, he had a very great and good influence upon the university in general. Every LORD's day in the afternoon, for almost twenty years together, he preached in Trinity-church, where he had a great number not only of the young scholars, but of those of greater standing and best repute for learning in the university, his constant and attentive auditors: and in those wild and unsettled times contributed more to the forming of the students of that university to a sober sense of religion than any man in that age.

After he left Cambridge he came to London, and was chosen minister of Black-Friers, where he continued 'till the dreadful fire, and then retired himself to a donative he had at Milton near Cambridge; where he preached constantly, and relieved the poor, and had their children taught to read at his own charge; and made up differences among the neighbours. Here he stayed 'till, by the promotion of the reverend Dr. Wilkins, his predecessor in this place, to the bishoprick of Chester, he was by his interest and recommendation presented to this church. But during the building of it, upon the invitation of the court of aldermen, in the mayoralty of Sir William Turner, he preached before that honourable audience at Guildhall chapel every sunday in the afternoon with great acceptance and approbation, for about the space of seven years.

When his church was built, he bestowed his pains here twice a week, where he had the general love and respect of his parish; and a very considerable and judicious auditory, though not very numerous by reason of the weakness of his voice in his declining age.

It

It pleaſed God to bleſs him, as with a plentiful eſtate, ſo with a charitable mind: which yet was not ſo well known to many, becauſe in the diſpoſal of his charity he very much affected ſecrecy. He frequently beſtowed his alms (as I am informed by thoſe who beſt knew) on poor houſe-keepers diſabled by age or ſickneſs to ſupport themſelves, thinking thoſe to be the moſt proper objects of it. He was rather frugal in expence upon himſelf, that ſo he might have wherewithal to relieve the neceſſities of others.

And he was not only charitable in his life, but in a very bountiful manner at his death; bequeathing in pious and charitable legacies to the value of a thouſand pounds. To the library of the univerſity of Cambridge fifty pounds: and of King's College one hundred pounds: and of Emanuel College twenty pounds: to which college he had been a conſiderable benefactor before; having founded there ſeveral ſcholarſhips to the value of a thouſand pounds, out of a charity with the diſpoſal whereof he was intruſted, and which not without great difficulty and pains he at laſt recovered.

To the poor of the ſeveral places where his eſtate lay, and where he had been miniſter, he gave above one hundred pounds.

Among thoſe who had been his ſervants, or were ſo at his death, he diſpoſed in annuities and legacies in money to the value of above three hundred pounds.

To other charitable uſes and among the poorer of his relations, above three hundred pounds.

SERM. XXIV.

To every one of his tenants he left a legacy according to the proportion of the eſtate they held, by way of remembrance of him; and to one of them that was gone much behind he remitted in his will ſeventy pounds. And as became his great goodneſs, he was ever a remarkably kind landlord, forgiving his tenants, and always making abatements to them for hard years or any other accidental loſſes that happened to them.

I muſt not omit the wiſe proviſion he made in his will to prevent law-ſuits among the legatees, by appointing two or three perſons of greateſt prudence and authority among his relations final arbitrators of all differences that ſhould ariſe.

Having given this account of his laſt will, I come now to the ſad part of all: ſad I mean to us, but happieſt to him. A little before Eaſter laſt he went down to Cambridge: where, upon taking a great cold, he fell into a diſtemper which in a few days put a period to his life. He died in the houſe of his ancient and moſt learned friend, Dr. Cudworth, maſter of Chriſt's College. During his ſickneſs he had a conſtant calmneſs and ſerenity of mind: and under all his bodily weakneſs poſſeſt his ſoul in great patience. After the prayers for the viſitation of the ſick (which he ſaid were excellent prayers) had been uſed, he was put in mind of receiving the ſacrament; to which he anſwered, that he moſt readily embraced the propoſal: and after he had received it, ſaid to Dr. Cudworth, I heartily thank you for this moſt chriſtian office: I thank you for putting me in mind of receiving this ſacrament: adding this pious ejaculation, The LORD fulfil all his

his declarations and promiſes, and pardon all my weakneſſes and imperfections. He diſclaimed all merit in himſelf; and declared that whatever he was, he was through the grace and goodneſs of GOD in JESUS CHRIST. He expreſſed likewiſe great diſlike of the principles of ſeparation; and ſaid he was the more deſirous to receive the ſacrament that he might declare his full communion with the church of CHRIST all the world over. He diſclaimed popery, and, as things of near affinity with it, or rather parts of it, all ſuperſtition, and uſurpation upon the conſciences of men.

He thanked GOD, that he had no pain in his body, nor diſquiet in his mind.

Towards his laſt he ſeemed rather unwilling to be detained any longer in this ſtate; not for any pains he felt in himſelf, but for the trouble he gave his friends: ſaying to one of them who had with great care attended him all along in his ſickneſs, my dear friend, thou haſt taken a great deal of pains to uphold a crazy body, but it will not do: I pray thee give me no more cordials; for why ſhouldſt thou keep me any longer out of that happy ſtate to which I am going? I thank GOD I hope in his mercy, that it ſhall be well with me.

And herein GOD was pleaſed particularly to anſwer thoſe devout and well-weighed petitions of his, which he frequently uſed in his prayer before ſermon, which I ſhall ſet down in his own words, and I doubt not thoſe that were his conſtant hearers do well remember them; "and ſuperadd this, O LORD, "to all the grace and favour which thou haſt ſhewn "us all along in life, not to remove us hence but "with

SERM. XXIV.

" with all advantage for eternity, when we ſhall be in " a due preparation of mind, in a holy conſtitution " of ſoul, in a perfect renunciation of the guiſe of this " mad and ſinful world, when we ſhall be intirely re- " ſigned up to thee, when we ſhall have clear acts of " faith in GOD by JESUS CHRIT, high and reveren- " tial thoughts of thee in our minds, enlarged and in- " flamed affections towards thee, *&c.* And whenſo- " ever we ſhall come to leave this world, which will " be when thou ſhalt appoint (for the iſſues of life and " death are in thy hands) afford us ſuch a mighty " power and preſence of thy good ſpirit, that we may " have ſolid conſolation in believing, and avoid all " conſternation of mind, all doubtfulneſs and uncer- " tainty concerning our everlaſting condition, and " at length depart in the faith of GOD's elect, *&c.*" " Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, " for the the end of that man is peace."

Thus you have the ſhort hiſtory of the life and death of this eminent perſon; whoſe juſt character cannot be given in few words, and time will not allow me to uſe many. To be able to deſcribe him aright it were neceſſary one ſhould be like him; for which reaſon I muſt content my ſelf with a very imperfect draught of him.

I ſhall not inſiſt upon his exemplary piety and devotion towards GOD, of which his whole life was one continued teſtimony. Nor will I praiſe his profound learning, for which he was juſtly had in ſo great reputation. The moral improvements of his mind, a god-like temper and diſpoſition (as he was wont to call it) he chiefly valued and aſpired after; that univerſal charity and goodneſs, which he did continually preach and practiſe. His

His converſation was exceeding kind and affable, grave and winning, prudent and profitable. He was ſlow to declare his judgment, and modeſt in delivering it. Never paſſionate, never peremptory: ſo far from impoſing upon others, that he was rather apt to yield. And though he had a moſt profound and well-poiſed judgment, yet was he of all men I ever knew the moſt patient to hear others differ from him, and the moſt eaſy to be convinced when good reaſon was offered; and, which is ſeldom ſeen, more apt to be favourable to another man's reaſon than his own.

Studious and inquiſitive men commonly at ſuch an age (at forty or fifty at the utmoſt) have fixed and ſettled their judgments in moſt points, and as it were made their laſt underſtanding; ſuppoſing they have thought, or read, or heard what can be ſaid on all ſides of things; and after that, they grow poſitive and impatient of contradiction, thinking it a diſparagement to them to alter their judgment: but our deceaſed friend was ſo wiſe, as to be willing to learn to the laſt; knowing that no man can grow wiſer without ſome change of his mind, without gaining ſome knowledge which he had not, or correcting ſome error which he had before.

He had attained ſo perfect a maſtery of his paſſions, that for the latter and greateſt part of his life he was hardly ever ſeen to be tranſported with anger: and as he was extremely careful not to provoke any man, ſo not to be provoked by any; uſing to ſay, if I provoke a man he is the worſe for my company, and if I ſuffer my ſelf to be provoked by him I ſhall be the worſe for his.

He

SERM. XXIV.

He very ſeldom reproved any perſon in company otherwiſe than by ſilence, or ſome ſign of uneaſineſs, or ſome very ſoft and gentle word; which yet from the reſpect men generally bore to him did often prove effectual: for he underſtood humane nature very well, and how to apply himſelf to it in the moſt eaſy and effectual ways.

He was a great encourager and kind director of young divines: and one of the moſt candid hearers of ſermons, I think, that ever was: ſo that though all men did mightily reverence his judgment, yet no man had reaſon to fear his cenſure. He never ſpake well of himſelf, nor ill of others: making good that ſaying of Panſa in Tully, *Neminem alterius, qui ſuæ confideret virtuti, invidere*; "that no man is apt to "envy the worth and virtues of another, that hath "any of his own to truſt to."

In a word, he had all thoſe virtues, and in a high degree, which an excellent temper, great conſideration, long care and watchfulneſs over himſelf, together with the aſſiſtance of God's grace (which he continually implored, and mightily relied upon) are apt to produce. Particularly he excelled in the virtues of converſation, humanity, and gentleneſs, and humility, a prudent and peaceable and reconciling temper. And God knows we could very ill at this time have ſpared ſuch a man; and have loſt from among us as it were ſo much balm for the healing of the nation, which is now ſo miſerably rent and torn by thoſe wounds which we madly give ourſelves. But ſince God hath thought good to deprive us of him, let his virtues live in our memory, and his example in our lives. Let us endeavour to be what he was,

and

and we ſhall one day be what he now is, of bleſſed memory on earth, and happy for ever in heaven. SERM. XXIV.

And now methinks the conſideration of the argument I have been upon, and of that great example that is before us, ſhould raiſe our minds above this world, and fix them upon the glory and happineſs of the other. Let us then then begin heaven here, in the frame and temper of our minds, in our heavenly affections and converſation; in a due preparation for, and in earneſt deſires and breathings after that bleſſed ſtate which we firmly believe and aſſuredly hope to be one day poſſeſſed of: when we ſhall be removed out of this ſink of ſin and ſorrows into the regions of bliſs and immortality: where we ſhall meet all thoſe worthy and excellent perſons who are gone before us, and whoſe converſation was ſo delightful to us in this world; and will be much more ſo to us in the other, when the ſpirits of juſt men ſhall be made perfect, and ſhall be quit of all thoſe infirmities which did attend and leſſen them in this mortal ſtate; when we ſhall meet again with our dear brother, and all thoſe good men whom we knew in this world, and with the ſaints and excellent perſons of all ages, to enjoy their bleſſed friendſhip and ſociety for ever, in the preſence of the bleſſed God, where is "fulneſs of "joy, at whoſe right hand are pleaſures for ever-"more."

In a firm perſuaſion of this happy ſtate let us every one of us ſay with David, and with the ſame ardency of affection that he did, "As the hart panteth after "the water-brooks, ſo panteth my ſoul after thee, "O God; my ſoul thirſteth for God, for the living "God; O when ſhall I come and appear before

3.

SERM. XXIV.

" GOD;" that ſo the life which we now live in this world may be " a patient continuance in well-doing " in a joyful expectation of the bleſſed hope and the " glorious appearance of the great GOD and our " SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST;" to whom with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST be all honour and glory, now and for ever.

" Now the GOD of peace who brought again from " the dead our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the great " ſhepherd of the ſheep, through the blood of the " everlaſting covenant, make us perfect in every " good work to do his will; working in us always " that which is well-pleaſing in his ſight, through " JESUS CHRIST; to whom be glory for ever. " Amen."

SERMON

SERMON XXV.

A perſuaſive to frequent communion.

---

1 COR. xi. 26, 27, 28.

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do ſhew the LORD'S *death 'till he come.*

Wherefore whoſoever ſhall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the LORD *unworthily, is guilty of the body and blood of the* LORD.

But let a man examine himſelf, and ſo let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

MY deſign in this argument is, from the conſideration of the nature of this ſacrament of the LORD'S ſupper, and of the perpetual uſe of it to the end of the world, to awaken men to a ſenſe of their duty, and the great obligation that lies upon them to the more frequent receiving of it. And there is the greater need to make men ſenſible of their duty in this particular, becauſe in this laſt age by the unwary diſcourſe of ſome concerning the nature of this ſacrament and the danger of receiving it unworthily, ſuch doubts and fears have been raiſed in the minds of men, as utterly to deter many, and in a great meaſure to diſcourage almoſt the generality of chriſtians from the uſe of it; to the great prejudice and danger of mens ſouls, and the viſible abatement of piety, by the groſs neglect of ſo excellent a means of our growth and

SERM. XXV.

SERM. XXV. improvement in it; and to the mighty ſcandal of our religion, by the general diſuſe and contempt of ſo plain and ſolemn an inſtitution of our bleſſed LORD and SAVIOUR.

Therefore I ſhall take occaſion, as briefly and clearly as I can, to treat of theſe four points.

Firſt, of the perpetuity of this inſtitution; this the apoſtle ſignifies when he ſaith, that "by eating "this bread, and drinking this cup, we do ſhew the "LORD's death 'till he come."

Secondly, of the obligation that lies upon all chriſtians to a frequent obſervance of this inſtitution; this is ſignified in that expreſſion of the apoſtle, "as "often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup:" which expreſſion conſidered and compared together with the practice of the primitive church, does imply an obligation upon chriſtians to the frequent receiving of this ſacrament.

Thirdly, I ſhall endeavour to ſatisfy the objections and ſcruples which have been raiſed in the minds of men, and particularly of many devout and ſincere chriſtians, to their great diſcouragement from their receiving this ſacrament, at leaſt ſo frequently as they ought: which objections are chiefly grounded upon what the apoſtle ſays, "Wherefore whoſoever ſhall "eat this bread and drink this cup of the LORD "unworthily, is guilty of the body and blood of "the LORD: and doth eat and drink damnation to "himſelf."

Fourthly, what preparation of ourſelves is neceſſary in order to our worthy receiving of this ſacrament; which will give me occaſion to explain the apoſtle's meaning in thoſe words, "But let a man exa-

"mine

" mine himſelf, and ſo let him eat of that bread, " and drink of that cup." SERM. XXV.

I. For the perpetuity of this inſtitution, implied in thoſe words, " For as often as ye eat this bread, " and drink this cup, ye do ſhew forth the LORD's " death 'till he come;" or the words may be read imperatively and by way of precept, " ſhew ye forth " the LORD's death 'till he come." In the three verſes immediately before, the apoſtle particularly declares the inſtitution of this ſacrament, with the manner and circumſtances of it, as he had received it not only by the hands of the apoſtles, but as the words ſeem rather to intimate, by immediate revelation from our LORD himſelf, ver. 23. " For I have " received of the LORD that which I alſo delivered " unto you: that the LORD JESUS in the ſame night " that he was betrayed took bread: and when he had " given thanks he brake it, and ſaid, take, eat, this " is my body which is broken for you; this do in re- " membrance of me. After the ſame manner alſo " he took the cup when he had ſupped, ſaying, " this cup is the new teſtament in my blood: this " do as often as ye ſhall drink it in remembrance of " me." So that the inſtitution is in theſe words, " this do in remembrance of me." In which words our LORD commands his diſciples after his death to repeat theſe occaſions of taking, and breaking, and eating the bread, and of drinking of the cup, by way of ſolemn commemoration of him. Now whether this was to be done by them once only, or oftner; and whether by the diſciples only during their lives, or by all chriſtians afterwards in all ſucceſſive ages of the church, is not ſo certain merely from

SERM. XXV.

from the force of theſe words, " do this in remembrance of me:" but what the apoſtle adds puts the matter out of all doubt, that the inſtitution of this ſacrament was intended, not only for the apoſtles, and for that age, but for all chriſtians, and for all ages of the chriſtian church; " For as often as ye " eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do ſhew the " LORD's death 'till he come:" that is, until the time of his ſecond coming, which will be at the end of the world. So that this ſacrament was deſigned to be a ſtanding commemoration of the death and paſſion of our LORD 'till he ſhould come to judgment; and conſequently the obligation that lies upon chriſtians to the obſervation of it is perpetual, and ſhall never ceaſe to the end of the world.

So that it is a vain conceit and mere dream of the enthuſiaſts concerning the *ſeculum Spiritûs ſancti*, " the age and diſpenſation of the HOLY GHOST," when, as they ſuppoſe, all humane teaching ſhall ceaſe, and all external ordinances and inſtitutions in religion ſhall vaniſh, and there ſhall be no farther uſe of them. Whereas it is very plain from the new teſtament, that prayer, and outward teaching, and the uſe of the two ſacraments, were intended to continue among chriſtians in all ages. As for prayer, (beſides our natural obligation to this duty, if there were no revealed religion) we are by our SAVIOUR particularly exhorted to watch and pray with regard to the day of judgment, and in conſideration of the uncertainty of the time when it ſhall be: and therefore this will always be a duty incumbent upon chriſtians 'till the day of judgment, becauſe it is preſcribed as one of the beſt ways of preparation for it.

That

That outward teaching likewiſe and baptiſm were intended to be perpetual is no leſs plain, becauſe CHRIST hath expreſly promiſed to be with the teachers of his church in the uſe of theſe ordinances to the end of the world, Matth. xxviii. 19, 20. "Go and diſciple all nations, baptizing them in the "name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of "the HOLY GHOST: and lo I am with you always "to the end of the world." Not only to the end of that particular age, but to the end of the goſpel-age, and the conſummation of all ages, as the phraſe clearly imports. And it is plain from this text, that the ſacrament of the LORD's ſupper was intended for a perpetual inſtitution in the chriſtian church, 'till the ſecond coming of CHRIST, viz. his coming to judgment: becauſe St. Paul tells us, that by theſe ſacramental ſigns the death of CHRIST is to be repreſented and commemorated 'till he comes. "Do this in remembrance of me: for as often as ye "eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do ſhew the "LORD's death 'till he come." SERM. XXV.

And if this be the end and uſe of this ſacrament, to be a ſolemn remembrance of the death and ſufferings of our LORD during his abſence from us, that is, 'till his coming to judgment, then this ſacrament will never be out of date 'till the ſecond coming of our LORD. The conſideration whereof ſhould mightily ſtrengthen and encourage our faith in the hope of eternal life ſo often as we partake of this ſacrament: ſince our LORD hath left it to us as a memorial of himſelf 'till he came to tranſlate his church into heaven, and as a ſure pledge that he will come again at the end of the world, and inveſt us in

SERM. XXV.

in that glory which he is now gone before to prepare for us. So that as often as we approach the table of the LORD, we ſhould comfort ourſelves with the thoughts of that bleſſed time when we ſhall eat and drink with him in his kingdom, and ſhall be admitted to the great feaſt of the lamb, and to eternal communion with GOD the judge of all, and with our bleſſed and glorified redeemer, and the holy angels, and the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect.

And the ſame conſideration ſhould likewiſe make us afraid to receive this ſacrament unworthily, without due preparation for it, and without worthy effects of it upon our hearts and lives; becauſe of that dreadful ſentence of condemnation which at the ſecond coming of our LORD ſhall be paſt upon thoſe, who by the profanation of this ſolemn inſtitution trample under foot the SON of GOD, and contemn the blood of the covenant; that covenant of grace and mercy which GOD hath ratified with mankind by the blood of his SON. The apoſtle tells us that "he that eateth and drinketh unworthily is guilty of "the body and blood of the LORD, and eateth and "drinketh damnation to himſelf." This indeed is ſpoken of temporal judgment (as I ſhall ſhew in the latter part of this diſcourſe,) but the apoſtle likewiſe ſuppoſeth, that if theſe temporal judgments had not their effect to bring men to repentance, but they ſtill perſiſted in the profanation of this holy ſacrament, they ſhould at laſt "be condemned with the world." For as he that partaketh worthily of this ſacrament confirms his intereſt in the promiſes of the Goſpel, and his title to eternal life; ſo he that receives this ſacrament unworthily, that is, without due reverence, and

and without fruits meet for it; nay, on the contrary, continues to live in sin whilst he commemorates the death of CHRIST, "who gave himself for "us that he might redeem us from all iniquity," this man aggravates and seals his own damnation, because he is guilty of the body and blood of CHRIST, not only by the contempt of it, but by renewing in some sort the cause of his sufferings, and as it were "crucifying to himself afresh the LORD of life and "glory, and putting him to an open shame." And when the great judge of the world shall appear and pass final sentence upon men, such obstinate and impenitent wretches as could not be wrought upon by the remembrance of the dearest love of their dying LORD, nor be engaged to leave their sins by all the ties and obligations of this holy sacrament, shall have their portion with Pilate and Judas, with the chief priests and soldiers, who were the betrayers and murderers of the LORD of life and glory; and shall be dealt withal as those who are in some sort "guilty of "the body and blood of the LORD." Which severe threatning ought not to discourage men from the sacrament, but to deter all those from their sins who think of engaging themselves to GOD by so solemn and holy a covenant. It is by no means a sufficient reason to make men fly from the sacrament, but certainly one of the most powerful arguments in the world to make men forsake their sins; as I shall shew more fully under the third head of this discourse. SERM. XXV.

II. The obligation that lies upon all christians to the frequent observance and practice of this institution. For though it be not necessarily implied in

4.

SERM. XXV.

theſe words, "as oft as ye eat this bread and drink "this cup;" yet if we compare theſe words of the apoſtle with the uſage and practice of chriſtians at that time, which was to communicate in this holy ſacrament ſo often as they ſolemnly met together to worſhip GOD, they plainly ſuppoſe and recommend to us the frequent uſe of this ſacrament, or rather imply an obligation upon chriſtians to embrace all opportunities of receiving it. For the ſenſe and meaning of any law or inſtitution is beſt underſtood by the general practice which follows immediately upon it.

And to convince men of their obligation hereunto, and to engage them to a ſuitable practice, I ſhall now endeavour with all the plainneſs and force of perſuaſion I can: And ſo much the more, becauſe the neglect of it among chriſtians is grown ſo general, and a great many perſons from a ſuperſtitious awe and reverence of this ſacrament are by degrees fallen into a profane neglect and contempt of it.

I ſhall briefly mention a threefold obligation lying upon all chriſtians to frequent communion in this holy ſacrament; each of them ſufficient of it ſelf, but all of them together of the greateſt force imaginable to engage us hereunto.

1. We are obliged in point of indiſpenſable duty, and in obedience to a plain precept and moſt ſolemn inſtitution of our bleſſed SAVIOUR that great lawgiver, "who is able to ſave and to deſtroy," as St. James calls him: He hath bid us "do this." And St. Paul who declares nothing in this matter but what he tells us he "received from the LORD," admoniſheth

admoniſheth us to do it often. Now for any man that profeſſeth himſelf a chriſtian to live in the open and continued contempt or neglect of a plain law and inſtitution of CHRIST is utterly inconſiſtent with ſuch a profeſſion. To ſuch our LORD may ſay as he did to the jews, "Why call ye me LORD, LORD, "and do not the things which I ſay?" how far the ignorance of this inſtitution, or the miſtakes which men have been led into about it, may extenuate this neglect, is another conſideration. But after we know our LORD's will in this particular and have the law plainly laid before us, there is no cloke for our ſin. For nothing can excuſe the wilful neglect of a plain inſtitution from a downright contempt of our SAVIOUR's authority.

2. We are likewiſe obliged hereunto in point of intereſt. The benefits which we expect to be derived and aſſured to us by this ſacrament are all the bleſſings of the new covenant, the forgiveneſs of our ſins, the grace and aſſiſtance of GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT to enable us to perform the conditions of this covenant required on our part; and the comforts of GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT to encourage us in well-doing, and to ſupport us under ſufferings; and the glorious reward of eternal life. So that in neglecting this ſacrament we neglect our own intereſt and happineſs, we forſake our own mercies, and judge our ſelves unworthy of all the bleſſings of the goſpel, and deprive our ſelves of one of the beſt means and advantages of confirming and conveying theſe bleſſings to us. So that if we had not a due ſenſe of our duty, the conſideration of our own intereſt ſhould oblige us not to neglect ſo excellent and ſo effectual

SERM. XXV.

a means of promoting our own comfort and happineſs.

3. We are likewiſe particularly obliged in point of gratitude to the careful obſervance of this inſtitution. This was the particular thing our LORD gave in charge when he was going to lay down his life for us, "do this in remembrance of me." Men uſe religiouſly to obſerve the charge of a dying friend, and, unleſs it be very difficult and unreaſonable, to do what he deſires: but this is the charge of our beſt friend (nay of the greateſt friend and benefactor of all mankind) when he was preparing himſelf to die in our ſtead and to offer up himſelf a ſacrifice for us; to undergo the moſt grievous pains and ſufferings for our ſakes, and to yield up himſelf to the worſt of temporal deaths that he might deliver us from the bitter pains of eternal death. And can we deny him any thing he asks of us who was going to do all this for us? can we deny him this? ſo little grievous and burdenſom in it ſelf, ſo infinitely beneficial to us? had ſuch a friend, and in ſuch circumſtances, bid us do ſome great thing, would we not have done it? how much more when he hath only ſaid, "do this in remembrance "of me;" when he hath only commended to us one of the moſt natural and delightful Actions, as a fit repreſentation and memorial of his wonderful love to us, and of his cruel ſufferings for our ſakes; when he hath only injoined us, in a thankful commemoration of this goodneſs, to meet at his table and to remember what he hath done for us, to look upon him whom we have pierced, and to reſolve to grieve and wound him no more? can we without the moſt horrible

horrible ingratitude neglect this dying charge of our Sovereign and our SAVIOUR, the great friend and lover of souls? a command so reasonable, so easy, so full of blessings and benefits to the faithful observers of it! SERM. XXV.

One would think it were no difficult matter to convince men of their duty in this particular, and of the necessity of observing so plain an institution of our LORD; that it were no hard thing to persuade men to their interest, and to be willing to partake of those great and manifold blessings which all christians believe to be promised and made good to the frequent and worthy receivers of this sacrament. Where then lies the difficulty? what should be the cause of all this backwardness which we see in men to so plain, so necessary, and so beneficial a duty? the truth is, men have been greatly discouraged from this sacrament by the unwary pressing and inculcating of two great truths: the danger of the unworthy receiving of this holy sacrament, and the necessity of a due preparation for it. Which brings me to the

III. Third particular I proposed, which was to endeavour to satisfy the objections and scruples which have been raised in the minds of men, and particularly of many devout and sincere christians, to their great discouragement from the receiving of this sacrament, at least so frequently as they ought. And these objections, I told you, are chiefly grounded upon what the apostle says at the 27th verse. "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this "cup of the LORD unworthily, is guilty of the body "and blood of the LORD." And again ver. 29. "He

SERM. XXV.

" He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth " and drinketh damnation to himſelf. " Upon the miſtake and miſapplication of theſe texts have been grounded two objections, of great force to diſcourage men from this ſacrament, which I ſhall endeavour with all the tenderneſs and clearneſs I can to remove. Firſt, that the danger of unworthy receiving being ſo very great, it ſeems the ſafeſt way not to receive at all. Secondly, that ſo much preparation and worthineſs being required in order to our worthy receiving, the more timorous ſort of devout chriſtians can never think themſelves duly enough qualified for ſo ſacred an action.

Obj. 1. 1. That the danger of unworthy receiving being ſo very great, it ſeems the ſafeſt way wholly to refrain from this ſacrament and not receive it at all. But this objection is evidently of no force if there be (as moſt certainly there is) as great or greater danger on the other hand, viz. in the neglect of this duty: and ſo though the danger of unworthy receiving be avoided by not receiving, yet the danger of neglecting and contemning a plain inſtitution of CHRIST is not thereby avoided. Surely they in the parable that refuſed to come to the marriage-feaſt of the king's ſon, and made light of that gracious invitation, were at leaſt as faulty as he who came " without a wedding garment. " And we find in the concluſion of the parable, that as he was ſeverely puniſhed for his diſreſpect, ſo they were deſtroyed for their diſobedience. Nay of the two it is the greater ſign of contempt wholly to neglect the ſacrament, than to partake of it without ſome due qualification. The greateſt indiſpoſition that can be

be for this holy ſacrament is one's being a bad man, and he may be as bad, and is more likely to continue ſo, who wilfully neglects this ſacrament, than he that comes to it with any degree of reverence and preparation, though much leſs than he ought: and ſurely it is very hard for men to come to ſo ſolemn an ordinance without ſome kind of religious awe upon their ſpirits, and without ſome good thoughts and reſolutions, at leaſt for the preſent. If a man that lives in any known wickedneſs of life do before he receive the ſacrament ſet himſelf ſeriouſly to be humbled for his ſins, and to repent of them, and to beg GOD's grace and aſſiſtance againſt them; and after the receiving of it, does continue for ſome time in theſe good reſolutions, though after a while he may poſſibly relapſe into the ſame ſins again; this is ſome kind of reſtraint to a wicked life; and theſe good moods and fits of repentance and reformation are much better than a conſtant and uninterrupted courſe of ſin: even this righteouſneſs, which is but "as the morning cloud and the early dew "which ſo ſoon paſſeth away," is better than none. SERM. XXV.

And indeed ſcarce any man can think of coming to the ſacrament, but he will by this conſideration be excited to ſome good purpoſes, and put upon ſome ſort of endeavour to amend and reform his life: and though he be very much under the bondage and power of evil habits, if he do with any competent degree of ſincerity (and it is his own fault if he do not) make uſe of this excellent means and inſtrument for the mortifying and ſubduing of his luſts and for the obtaining of GOD's grace and aſſiſtance, it may

pleaſe

SERM. XXV.

pleaſe God by the uſe of theſe means ſo to abate the force and power of his luſts, and to imprint ſuch conſiderations upon his mind in the receiving of this holy ſacrament and preparing himſelf for it, that he may at laſt break off his wicked courſe and become a good man.

But, on the other hand, as to thoſe who neglect this ſacrament, there is hardly any thing left to reſtrain them from the greateſt enormities of life, and to give a check to them in their evil courſe: nothing but the penalty of humane laws, which men may avoid and yet be wicked enough. Heretofore men uſed to be reſtrained from great and ſcandalous vices by ſhame and fear of diſgrace, and would abſtain from many ſins out of regard to their honour and reputation among men: but men have hardened their faces in this degenerate age, and thoſe gentle reſtraints of modeſty which governed and kept men in order heretofore ſignify nothing now-a-days: bluſhing is out of faſhion, and ſhame is ceaſed from among the children of men.

But the ſacrament did always uſe to lay ſome kind of reſtraint upon the worſt of men: and if it did not wholly reform them, it would at leaſt have ſome good effect upon them for a time: if it did not make men good, yet it would make them reſolve to be ſo, and leave ſome good thoughts and impreſſions upon their minds.

So that I doubt not but it hath been a thing of very bad conſequence, to diſcourage men ſo much from the ſacrament, as the way hath been of late years: and that many men who were under ſome kind of check before, ſince they have been driven away

away from the ſacrament, have quite let looſe the reins, and proſtituted themſelves to all manner of impiety and vice. And among the many ill effects of our paſt confuſions, this is none of the leaſt, that in many congregations of this kingdom chriſtaans were generally diſuſed and deterred from the ſacrament, upon a pretence that they were unfit for it: and being ſo, they muſt neceſſarily incur the danger of unworthy receiving; and therefore they had better wholly abſtain from it. By which it came to paſs that in very many places this great and ſolemn inſtitution of the chriſtian religion was almoſt quite forgotten, as if it had been no part of it; and the remembrance of CHRIST's death even loſt among chriſtians: ſo that many congregations in England might juſtly have taken up the complaint of the woman at our SAVIOUR's ſepulchre, "they "have taken away our LORD, and we know not "where they have laid him?" SERM. XXV.

But ſurely men did not well conſider what they did, nor what the conſequences of it would be, when they did ſo earneſtly diſſuade men from the ſacrament. 'Tis true indeed the danger of unworthy receiving is great; but the proper inference and concluſion from hence is not that men ſhould upon this conſideration be deterred from the ſacrament, but that they ſhould be affrighted from their ſins, and from that wicked courſe of life which is an habitual indiſpoſition and unworthineſs. St. Paul indeed (as I obſerved before) truly repreſents, and very much aggravates the danger of the unworthy receiving of this ſacrament; but he did not deter the Corinthians from it, becauſe they had ſometimes come to it without

4.

SERM. XXV.

due reverence, but exhorts them to amend what had been amiſs, and to come better prepared and diſpoſed for the future. And therefore after that terrible declaration in the text, "Whoſoever ſhall eat this "bread and drink this cup of the LORD unworthily, is guilty of the body and blood of the "LORD," he does not add, therefore let chriſtians take heed of coming to the ſacrament, but, let them come prepared and with due reverence, not as to a common meal, but to a ſolemn participation of the body and blood of CHRIST; "but let "a man examine himſelf, and ſo let him eat of "that bread and drink of that cup?"

For, if this be a good reaſon to abſtain from the ſacrament, for fear of performing ſo ſacred an action in an undue manner, it were beſt for a bad man to lay aſide all religion, and to give over the exerciſe of all the duties of piety, of prayer, of reading and hearing the word of GOD; becauſe there is a proportionable danger in the unworthy and unprofitable uſe of any of theſe. "The prayer of the "wicked (that is, of one that reſolves to continue "ſo) is an abomination to the LORD." And our SAVIOUR gives us the ſame caution concerning hearing the word of GOD; "take heed how you hear." And St. Paul tells us, that thoſe who are not reformed by the doctrine of the goſpel, it is the ſavour of death, that is, deadly and damnable to ſuch perſons.

But now will any man from hence argue, that it is beſt for a wicked man not to pray, nor to hear or read the word of GOD, leſt by ſo doing he ſhould endanger and aggravate his condemnation? and

SERM. XXV.

and yet there is as much reaſon from this conſideration to perſuade men to give over praying and attending to GOD's word, as to lay aſide the uſe of the ſacrament. And it is every whit as true that he that prays unworthily and hears the word of GOD unworthily, that is, without fruit and benefit, is guilty of a great contempt of GOD and of our bleſſed SAVIOUR; and by his indevout prayers and unfruitful hearing of GOD's word does further and aggravate his own damnation: I ſay, this is every whit as true, as that he that eats and drinks the ſacrament unworthily is guilty of a high contempt of CHRIST, and "eats and drinks his own judg-"ment;" ſo that the danger of the unworthy performing this ſo ſacred an action is no otherwiſe a reaſon to any man to abſtain from the ſacrament, than it is an argument to him to caſt off all religion. He that unworthily uſeth or performs any part of religion is in an evil and dangerous condition; but he that caſts off all religion plungeth himſelf into a moſt deſperate ſtate, and does certainly damn himſelf to avoid the danger of damnation: becauſe he that caſts off all religion throws off all the means whereby he ſhould be reclaimed and brought into a better ſtate. I cannot more fitly illuſtrate this matter than by this plain ſimilitude: he that eats and drinks intemperately endangers his health and his life, but he that to avoid this danger will not eat at all, I need not tell you what will certainly become of him in a very ſhort ſpace.

There are ſome conſcientious perſons who abſtain from the ſacrament upon an apprehenſion that the ſins which they ſhall commit afterwards are unpar-

SERM. XXV.

donable. But this is a great miſtake; our SAVIOUR having ſo plainly declared that all manner of ſin ſhall be forgiven men except the blaſphemy againſt the HOLY GHOST; ſuch as was that of the phariſees, who, as our SAVIOUR tells us, blaſphemed the HOLY GHOST in aſcribing thoſe great miracles which they ſaw him work, and which he really wrought by the SPIRIT of GOD, to the power of the devil. Indeed to ſin deliberately after ſo ſolemn an engagement to the contrary is a great aggravation of ſin, but not ſuch as to make it unpardonable. But the neglect of the ſacrament is not the way to prevent theſe ſins; but, on the contrary, the conſtant receiving of it with the beſt preparation we can is one of the moſt effectual means to prevent ſin for the future, and to obtain the aſſiſtance of GOD's grace to that end: and if we fall into ſin afterwards, we may be renewed by repentance; "for we have an advo- "cate with the father, JESUS CHRIST the righteous, "who is the propitiation for our ſins;" and as ſuch, is in a very lively and affecting manner exhibited to us in this bleſſed ſacrament of his body broken, and his blood ſhed for the remiſſion of our ſins. Can we think that the primitive chriſtians, who ſo frequently received this holy ſacrament, did never after the receiving of it fall into any deliberate ſin? undoubtedly, many of them did; but far be it from us to think that ſuch ſins were unpardonable, and that ſo many good men ſhould, becauſe of their careful and conſcientious obſervance of our LORD's inſtitution, unavoidably fall into condemnation.

To draw to a concluſion of this matter: ſuch groundleſs fears and jealouſies as theſe may be a ſign of

of a good meaning, but they are certainly a ſign of an injudicious mind. For if we ſtand upon theſe ſcruples, no man perhaps was ever ſo worthily prepared to draw near to GOD in any duty of religion, but there was ſtill ſome defect or other in the diſpoſition of his mind, and the degree of his preparation. But if we prepare ourſelves as well as we can, this is all GOD expects. And for our fears of falling into ſin afterwards, there is this plain anſwer to be given to it; that the danger of falling into ſin is not prevented by neglecting the ſacrament, but increaſed: becauſe a powerful and probable means of preſerving men from ſin is neglected. And why ſhould not every ſincere chriſtian, by the receiving of this ſacrament and renewing his covenant with GOD, rather hope to be confirmed in goodneſs, and to receive farther aſſiſtances of GOD's grace and HOLY SPIRIT to ſtrengthen him againſt ſin and to enable him to ſubdue it; than trouble himſelf with fears which are either without ground, or if they are not, are no ſufficient reaſon to keep any man from the ſacrament? We cannot ſurely entertain ſo unworthy a thought of GOD and our bleſſed SAVIOUR, as to imagine that he did inſtitute the ſacrament not for the furtherance of our ſalvation, but as a ſnare, and an occaſion of our ruin and damnation. This were to pervert the gracious deſign of GOD, and to turn the cup of ſalvation into a cup of deadly poiſon to the ſouls of men. SERM. XXV.

All then that can reaſonably be inferred from the danger of unworthy receiving is, that upon this conſideration men ſhould be quickned to come to the ſacrament with a due preparation of mind, and ſo much

SERM. XXV.

much the more to fortify their reſolutions of living ſuitably to that holy covenant which they ſolemnly renew every time they receive this holy ſacrament. This conſideration ought to convince us of the abſolute neceſſity of a good life, but not to deter us from the uſe of any means which may contribute to make us good. Therefore (as a learned divine ſays very well) this ſacrament can be neglected by none but thoſe that do not underſtand it, but thoſe who are unwilling to be tied to their duty, and are afraid of being engaged to uſe their beſt diligence to keep the commandments of CHRIST: and ſuch perſons have no reaſon to fear being in a worſe condition, ſince they are already in ſo bad a ſtate. And thus much may ſuffice for anſwer to the firſt objection concerning the great danger of unworthy receiving this holy ſacrament. I proceed to the

Obj. 2. 2. Second objection, which was this; that ſo much preparation and worthineſs being required to our worthy receiving, the more timorous ſort of chriſtians can never think themſelves duly enough qualified for ſo ſacred an action.

For a full anſwer to this objection, I ſhall endeavour briefly to clear theſe three things. Firſt, that every degree of imperfection in our preparation for this ſacrament is not a ſufficient reaſon for men to refrain from it. Secondly, that a total want of a due preparation, not only in the degree but in the main and ſubſtance of it, though it render us unfit at preſent to receive this ſacrament, yet it does by no means excuſe our neglect of it. Thirdly, that the proper inference and concluſion from the total want of a due preparation is not to caſt off all thoughts of receiving

receiving the ſacrament, but immediately to ſet upon the work of preparation that ſo we may be fit to receive it. And if I can clearly make out theſe three things, I hope this objection is fully anſwered. SERM. XXV.

1. That every degree of imperfection in our preparation for this ſacrament is not a ſufficient reaſon for men to abſtain from it: for then no man ſhould ever receive it. For who is every way worthy, and in all degrees and reſpects duly qualified to approach the preſence of GOD in any of the duties of his worſhip and ſervice? Who can waſh his hands in innocency, that ſo he may be perfectly fit to approach GOD's altar? "There is not a man on earth that "lives and ſins not." The graces of the beſt men are imperfect; and every imperfection in grace and goodneſs is an imperfection in the diſpoſition and preparation of our minds for this holy ſacrament: but if we do heartily repent of our ſins, and ſincerely reſolve to obey and perform the terms of the goſpel, and of that covenant which we entred into by baptiſm, and are going ſolemnly to renew and confirm by our receiving of this ſacrament, we are at leaſt in ſome degree and in the main qualified to partake of this holy ſacrament; and the way for us to be more fit is to receive this ſacrament frequently, that by this ſpiritual food of GOD's appointing, by "this living bread which comes down from heaven," our ſouls may be nouriſhed in goodneſs, and new ſtrength and virtue may be continually derived to us for the purifying of our hearts, and enabling us to run the ways of GOD's commandments with more conſtancy and delight. For the way to "grow in "grace" and to be "ſtrengthened with all might "in

SERM. XXV.

"in the inner man," and to "abound in all the "fruits of righteouſneſs which by CHRIST JESUS "are to the praiſe and glory of GOD," is with care and conſcience to uſe thoſe means which GOD hath appointed for this end: and if we will neglect the uſe of theſe means it is to no purpoſe for us to pray to GOD for his grace and aſſiſtance. We may tire ourſelves with our devotions, and fill heaven with vain complaints, and yet by all this importunity obtain nothing at GOD's hand: like lazy beggars that are always complaining and always asking, but will not work, will do nothing to help themſelves and better their condition, and therefore are never like to move the pity and compaſſion of others. If we expect GOD's grace and aſſiſtance, we muſt work out our own ſalvation in the careful uſe of all thoſe means which GOD hath appointed to that end. That excellent degree of goodneſs which men would have to fit them for the ſacrament, is not to be had but by the uſe of it. And therefore it is a prepoſterous thing for men to inſiſt upon having the end before they will uſe the means that may further them in the obtaining of it.

2. The total want of a due preparation, not only in the degree but in the main and ſubſtance of it, though it render us unfit at preſent to receive this ſacrament, yet does it by no means excuſe our neglect of it. One fault may draw on another, but can never excuſe it. It is our great fault that we are wholly unprepared, and no man can claim any benefit by his fault, or plead it in excuſe or extenuation of this neglect. A total want of preparation and an abſolute unworthineſs is impenitency in an evil courſe, a reſolution

reſolution to continue a bad man, not to quit his luſts and to break off that wicked courſe he hath lived in: but is this any excuſe for the neglect of our duty, that we will not fit ourſelves for the doing of it with benefit and advantage to ourſelves? A father commands his ſon to ask him bleſſing every day, and is ready to give it him; but ſo long as he is undutiful to him in his other actions, and lives in open diſobedience, forbids him to come in his ſight. He excuſeth himſelf from asking his father bleſſing, becauſe he is undutiful in other things, and reſolves to continue ſo. This is juſt the caſe of neglecting the duty GOD requires, and the bleſſings he offers to us in the ſacrament, becauſe we have made ourſelves incapable of ſo performing the one as to receive the other; and are reſolved to continue ſo. We will not do our duty in other things, and then plead that we are unfit and unworthy to do it in this particular of the ſacrament.

3. The proper inference and concluſion from a total want of due preparation for the ſacrament is not to caſt off all thoughts of receiving it, but immediately to ſet about the work of preparation, that ſo we may be fit to receive it. For if this be true, that they who are abſolutely unprepared ought not to receive the ſacrament, nor can do it with any benefit; nay by doing it in ſuch a manner render their condition much worſe, this is a moſt forcible argument to repentance and amendment of life: there is nothing reaſonable in this caſe but immediately to reſolve upon a better courſe, that ſo we may be meet partakers of thoſe holy myſteries, and may no longer provoke GOD's wrath againſt us by the wilful neglect of ſo

4.

SERM. XXV.

great and neceſſary a duty of the chriſtian religion. And we do wilfully neglect it, ſo long as we do wilfully refuſe to fit and qualify ourſelves for the due and worthy performance of it. Let us view the thing in a like caſe; a pardon is graciouſly offered to a rebel, he declines to accept it, and modeſtly excuſeth himſelf becauſe he is not worthy of it. And why is he not worthy? becauſe he reſolves to be a rebel, and then his pardon will do him no good, but be an aggravation of his crime. Very true: and it will be no leſs an aggravation that he refuſeth it for ſuch a reaſon, and under a pretence of modeſty does the moſt imprudent thing in the world. This is juſt the caſe; and in this caſe there is but one thing reaſonable to be done, and that is, for a man to make himſelf capable of the benefit as ſoon as he can, and thankfully to accept of it: but to excuſe himſelf from accepting of the benefit offered, becauſe he is not worthy of it, nor fit for it, nor never intends to be ſo, is as if a man ſhould deſire to be excuſed from being happy becauſe he is reſolved to play the fool and to be miſerable. So that whether our want of preparation be total, or only to ſome degree, it is every way unreaſonable: if it be in the degree only, it ought not to hinder us from receiving the ſacrament; if it be total, it ought to put us immediately upon removing the impediment, by making ſuch preparation as is neceſſary to the due and worthy receiving of it. And this brings me to the

IV. Fourth and laſt thing I propoſed, viz. what preparation of ourſelves is neceſſary in order to the worthy receiving of this ſacrament. Which I told you would give me occaſion to explain the apoſtle's meaning

meaning in the laſt part of the text, " but let a man " examine himſelf, and ſo let him eat of that bread " and drink of that cup." I think it very clear from the occaſion and circumſtances of the apoſtle's diſcourſe concerning the ſacrament that he does not intend the examination of our ſtate, whether we be chriſtians or not, and ſincerely reſolved to continue ſo; and conſequently that he does not here ſpeak of our habitual preparation by the reſolution of a good life. This he takes for granted, that they were chriſtians and reſolved to continue and perſevere in their chriſtian profeſſion: but he ſpeaks of their actual fitneſs and worthineſs at that time when they came to receive the LORD's ſupper. And for the clearing of this matter, we muſt conſider what it was that gave occaſion to this diſcourſe. At the 20th verſe of this chapter he ſharply reproves their irreverent and unſuitable carriage at the LORD's ſupper. They came to it very diſorderly, one before another. It was the cuſtom of chriſtians to meet at their feaſt of charity, in which they did communicate with great ſobriety and temperance; and when that was ended they celebrated the ſacrament of the LORD's ſupper. Now among the Corinthians this order was broken: the rich met and excluded the poor from this common feaſt. And after an irregular feaſt (one before another eating his own ſupper as he came) they went to the ſacrament in great diſorder; one was hungry, having eaten nothing at all; others were drunk, having eaten intemperately; and the poor were deſpiſed and neglected. This the apoſtle condemns as a great profanation of that ſolemn inſtitution of the ſacrament; at the participation whereof they behaved

SERM. XXV.

themſelves with as little reverence as if they had been met at a common ſupper or feaſt. And this he calls "not diſcerning the LORD's body," making no difference in their behaviour between the ſacrament and a common meal: which irreverent and contemptuous carriage of theirs he calls "eating and drinking "unworthily:" for which he pronounceth them "guilty of the body and blood of the LORD," which were repreſented and commemorated in their "eating of that bread and drinking of that cup." By which irreverent and contemptuous uſage of the body and blood of our LORD, he tells them that they did incur the judgment of GOD; which he calls "eating and drinking their own judgment." For that the word κρίσις, which our tranſlators render damnation, does not here ſignify eternal condemnation, but a temporal judgment and chaſtiſement in order to the prevention of eternal condemnation, is evident from what follows; "he that eateth and "drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judg- "ment to himſelf:" and then he ſays, "for this cauſe "many are weak and ſickly among you, and many "ſleep:" that is, for this irreverence of theirs GOD had ſent among them ſeveral diſeaſes, of which many had died. And then he adds, "for if we "would judge ourſelves, we ſhould not be judged." If we would judge ourſelves; whether this be meant of the publick cenſures of the church, or our private cenſuring of our ſelves in order to our future amendment and reformation, is not certain. If of the latter, which I think moſt probable, then judging here is much the ſame with examining ourſelves, ver. 28. And then the apoſtle's meaning is, that if we would

cenſure

cenſure and examine ourſelves, ſo as to be more careful for the future, we ſhould eſcape the judgment of GOD in theſe temporal puniſhments. " But when " we are judged, we are chaſtened of the LORD, " that we ſhould not be condemned with the world." But when we are judged; that is, when by neglecting thus to judge ourſelves we provoke GOD to judge us; " we are chaſtened of the LORD, that we ſhould " not be condemned with the world;" that is, he inflicts theſe temporal judgments upon us to prevent our eternal condemnation. Which plainly ſhews, that the judgment here ſpoken of is not eternal condemnation. And then he concludes, " Wherefore, " my brethren, when ye come together to eat tarry " for one another. And if any man hunger, let " him eat at home, that ye come not together unto " judgment:" where the apoſtle plainly ſhews both what was the crime of unworthy receiving, and the puniſhment of it. Their crime was, their irreverent and diſorderly participation of the ſacrament; and their puniſhment was, thoſe temporal judgments which GOD inflicted upon them for this their contempt of the ſacrament. SERM. XXV.

Now this being, I think, very plain; we are proportionably to underſtand the precept of examination of ourſelves " before we eat of that bread, and drink " of that cup. But let a man examine himſelf;" that is, conſider well with himſelf what a ſacred action he is going about, and what behaviour becomes him when he is celebrating this ſacrament inſtituted by our LORD in memorial of his body and blood, that is, of his death and paſſion: and if heretofore he have been guilty of any diſorder and irreverence (ſuch

SERM. XXV.

(ſuch as the apoſtle here taxeth them withal) let him cenſure and judge himſelf for it, be ſenſible of and ſorry for his fault, and be careful to avoid it for the future; and having thus "examined himſelf, let "him eat of that bread and drink of that cup." This, I think, is the plain ſenſe of the apoſtle's diſcourſe; and that if we attend to the ſcope and circumſtances of it, it cannot well have any other meaning.

But ſome will ſay, is this all the preparation that is required to our worthy receiving of the ſacrament, that we take care not to come drunk to it, nor to be guilty of any irreverence or diſorder in the celebration of it? I anſwer in ſhort, this was the particular unworthineſs with which the apoſtle taxeth the Corinthians; and which he warns them to amend, as they deſire to eſcape the judgments of GOD, ſuch as they had already felt for this irreverent carriage of theirs, ſo unſuitable to the holy ſacrament: he finds no other fault with them at preſent in this matter, though any other ſort of irreverence will proportionably expoſe men to the like puniſhment. He ſays nothing here of their habitual preparation, by the ſincere purpoſe and reſolution of a good life anſwerable to the rules of the chriſtian religion: this we may ſuppoſe he took for granted. However, it concerns the ſacrament no more than it does prayer or any other religious duty. Not but that it is very true that none but thoſe who do heartily embrace the chriſtian religion, and are ſincerely reſolved to frame their lives according to the holy rules and precepts of it, are fit to communicate in this ſolemn acknowledgment and profeſſion of it. So that it is a practice

practice very much to be countenanced and encouraged, becauſe it is of great uſe, for chriſtians by way of preparation for the ſacrament to examine themſelves in a larger ſenſe than in all probability the apoſtle here intended: I mean, to examine our paſt lives, and the actions of them, in order to a ſincere repentance of all our errors and miſcarriages, and to fix us in the ſteady purpoſe and reſolution of a better life: particularly, when we expect to have the forgiveneſs of our ſins ſealed to us, we ſhould lay aſide all enmity and thoughts of revenge, and heartily forgive thoſe that have offended us, and put in practice that univerſal love and charity which is repreſented to us by this holy communion. And to this purpoſe we are earneſtly exhorted in the publick office of the communion by way of due preparation and diſpoſition for it, "to repent us truly of our ſins paſt, to "amend our lives, and to be in perfect charity with "all men, that ſo we may be meet partakers of thoſe "holy myſteries." SERM. XXV.

And becauſe this work of examining ourſelves concerning our ſtate and condition, and of exerciſing repentance towards GOD and charity towards men is incumbent upon us as we are chriſtians, and can never be put in practice more ſeaſonably and with greater advantage than when we are meditating of this ſacrament, therefore beſides our habitual preparation by repentance and the conſtant endeavours of a holy life, it is a very pious and commendable cuſtom in chriſtians before their coming to the ſacrament to ſet apart ſome particular time for this work of examination. But how much time every perſon ſhould allot to this purpoſe is matter of prudence; and

SERM. XXV.

and as it need not, ſo neither indeed can it be preciſely determined. Some have greater reaſon to ſpend more time upon this work than others; I mean thoſe whoſe accounts are heavier, becauſe they have long run upon the ſcore and neglected themſelves: and ſome alſo have more leiſure and freedom for it, by reaſon of their eaſy condition and circumſtances in the world: and therefore are obliged to allow a greater portion of time for the exerciſes of piety and devotion. In general, no man ought to do a work of ſo great moment and concernment ſlightly and perfunctorily. And in this, as in all other actions, the end is principally to be regarded. Now the end of examining ourſelves is to underſtand our ſtate and condition, and to reform whatever we find amiſs in ourſelves. And provided this end be obtained, the circumſtances of the means are leſs conſiderable: whether more or leſs time be allowed to this work it matters not ſo much, as to make ſure that the work be thoroughly done.

And I do on purpoſe ſpeak thus cautiouſly in this matter, becauſe ſome pious perſons do perhaps err on the ſtricter hand, and are a little ſuperſtitious on that ſide; inſomuch that unleſs they can gain ſo much time to ſet apart for a ſolemn preparation, they will refrain from the ſacrament at that time; though otherwiſe they be habitually prepared. This I doubt not proceeds from a pious mind; but as the apoſtle ſays in another caſe about the ſacrament, "ſhall I "praiſe them in this? I praiſe them not." For, provided there be no wilful neglect of due preparation, it is much better to come ſo prepared as we can, nay I think it is our duty ſo to do, rather than

to

to abſtain upon this punctilio. For when all is done, the beſt preparation for the ſacrament is the general care and endeavour of a good life: and he that is thus prepared may receive at any time when opportunity is offered, though he had no particular foreſight of that opportunity. And I think in that caſe ſuch a one ſhall do much better to receive than to refrain; becauſe he is habitually prepared for the ſacrament, though he had no time to make ſuch actual preparation as he deſired. And if this were not allowable how could miniſters communicate with ſick perſons at all times, or perſuade others to do it many times upon very ſhort and ſudden warning? SERM. XXV.

And indeed we cannot imagine that the primitive chriſtians, who received the ſacrament ſo frequently, that for ought appears to the contrary they judged it as eſſential and neceſſary a part of their publick worſhip as any other part of it whatſoever, even as their hymns and prayers, and reading and interpreting the word of GOD: I ſay, we cannot well conceive how they who celebrated it ſo conſtantly, could allot any more time for a ſolemn preparation for it, than they did for any other part of divine worſhip: and conſequently, that the apoſtle when he bids the Corinthians examine themſelves, could mean no more than that conſidering the nature and ends of this inſtitution they ſhould come to it with great reverence; and reflecting upon their former miſcarriages in this matter, ſhould be careful upon his admonition to avoid them for the future, and to amend what had been amiſs: which to do, requires rather reſolution and care than any long time of preparation.

SERM. XXV.

I ſpeak this, that devout perſons may not be intangled in an apprehenſion of a greater neceſſity than really there is of a long and ſolemn preparation every time they receive the ſacrament. The great neceſſity that lies upon men is to live as becomes chriſtians, and then they can never be abſolutely unprepared. Nay, I think this to be a very good preparation: and I ſee not why men ſhould not be very well ſatisfied with it, unleſs they intend to make the ſame uſe of the ſacrament that many of the papiſts do of confeſſion and abſolution, which is to quit with GOD once or twice a year, that ſo they may begin to ſin again upon a new ſcore.

But becauſe the examination of ourſelves is a thing ſo very uſeful, and the time which men are wont to ſet apart for their preparation for the ſacrament is ſo advantageous an opportunity for the practice of it; therefore I cannot but very much commend thoſe who take this occaſion to ſearch and try their ways, and to call themſelves to a more ſolemn account of their actions. Becauſe this ought to be done ſome time, and I know no fitter time for it than this. And perhaps ſome would never find time to recollect themſelves and to take the condition of their ſouls into ſerious conſideration, were it not upon this ſolemn occaſion.

The ſum of what I have ſaid is this, that ſuppoſing a perſon to be habitually prepared by a religious diſpoſition of mind and the general courſe of a good life, this more ſolemn actual preparation is not always neceſſary: and it is better when there is an opportunity to receive without it, than not to receive at all. But the greater our actual preparation

is,

is, the better. For no man can examine himſelf too often, and underſtand the ſtate of his ſoul too well, and exerciſe repentance, and renew the reſolutions of a good life too frequently. And there is perhaps no fitter opportunity for the doing of all this, than when we approach the LORD's table, there to commemorate his death, and to renew our covenant with him to live as becomes the goſpel. SERM. XXV.

All the Reflexion I ſhall now make upon this diſcourſe, ſhall be from the conſideration of what hath been ſaid earneſtly to excite all that profeſs and call themſelves chriſtians to a due preparation of themſelves for this holy ſacrament, and a frequent participation of it according to the intention of our LORD and SAVIOUR in the inſtitution of it, and the undoubted practice of chriſtians in the primitive and beſt times, when men had more devotion and fewer ſcruples about their duty.

If we do in good earneſt believe that this ſacrament was inſtituted by our LORD in remembrance of his dying love, we cannot but have a very high value and eſteem for it upon that account. Methinks ſo often as we read in the inſtitution of it thoſe words of our dear LORD, "do this in remembrance of me," and conſider what he who ſaid them did for us, this dying charge of our beſt friend ſhould ſtick with us and make a ſtrong impreſſion upon our minds: eſpecially if we add to theſe, thoſe other words of his, not long before his death, "Greater love than this hath no man, that a man "lay down his life for his friend; ye are my friends "if ye do whatſoever I command you." It is a wonderful love which he hath expreſſed to us, and

SERM. XXV.

worthy to be had in perpetual remembrance. And all that he expects from us, by way of thankful acknowledgment, is to celebrate the remembrance of it by the frequent participation of this bleſſed ſacrament. And ſhall this charge, laid upon us by him who laid down his life for us, lay no obligation upon us to the ſolemn remembrance of that unparallel'd kindneſs which is the fountain of ſo many bleſſings and benefits to us? it is a ſign that we have no great ſenſe of the benefit when we are ſo unmindful of our benefactor as to forget him days without number. The obligation he hath laid upon us is ſo vaſtly great, not only beyond all requital but beyond all expreſſion, that if he had commanded us ſome very grievous thing we ought with all readineſs and chearfulneſs in the world to have done it; how much more when he hath impoſed upon us ſo eaſy a commandment, a thing of no burden but of immenſe benefit? when he hath only ſaid to us, "eat O "friends, and drink O beloved?" when he only invites us to his table, to the beſt and moſt delicious feaſt that we can partake of on this ſide heaven?

If we ſeriouſly believe the great bleſſings which are there exhibited to us and ready to be conferred upon us, we ſhould be ſo far from neglecting them, that we ſhould heartily thank GOD for every opportunity he offers to us of being made partakers of ſuch benefits. When ſuch a prize is put into our hands, ſhall we want hearts to make uſe of it? methinks we ſhould long with David (who ſaw but a ſhadow of theſe bleſſings) to be ſatisfied with the good things of GOD's houſe, and to draw near his altar; and ſhould cry out with him, "O when ſhall

"I

" I come and appear before thee! my ſoul longeth, SERM. XXV.
" yea even fainteth for the courts of the LORD, and
" my fleſh crieth out for the living GOD." And if we had a juſt eſteem of things, we ſhould account it the greateſt infelicity and judgment in the world to be debarred of this privilege, which yet we do deliberately and frequently deprive our ſelves of.

We exclaim againſt the church of Rome with great impatience, and with a very juſt indignation, for robbing the people of half this bleſſed ſacrament, and taking from them the cup of bleſſing, the cup of ſalvation; and yet we can patiently endure for ſome months, nay years, to exclude our ſelves wholly from it. If no ſuch great benefits and bleſſings belong to it, why do we complain of them for hindring us of any part of it? but if there do, why do we by our own neglect deprive our ſelves of the whole?

In vain do we bemoan the decay of our graces, and our ſlow progreſs and improvement in chriſtianity, whilſt we wilfully deſpiſe the beſt means of our growth in goodneſs. Well do we deſerve that GOD ſhould ſend leanneſs into our ſouls, and make them to conſume and pine away in perpetual doubting and trouble, if, when GOD himſelf doth ſpread ſo bountiful a table for us and ſet before us the bread of life, we will not come and feed upon it with joy and thankfulneſs.

SERMON

SERMON XXVI.

A Diſcourſe againſt Tranſubſtantiation.

SERM. XXVI.

CONcerning the ſacrament of the LORD's ſupper, one of the two great poſitive inſtitutions of the chriſtian religion, there are two main points of difference between us and the church of Rome. One about the doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation; in which they think, but are not certain, that they have the ſcripture and the words of our SAVIOUR on their ſide: the other, about the adminiſtration of this ſacrament to the people in both kinds; in which we are ſure that we have the ſcripture and our SAVIOUR's inſtitution on our ſide; and that ſo plainly that our adverſaries themſelves do not deny it.

Of the firſt of theſe I ſhall now treat, and endeavour to ſhew againſt the church of Rome, that in this ſacrament there is no ſubſtantial change made of the elements of bread and wine into the natural body and blood of CHRIST; that body which was born of the virgin Mary, and ſuffered upon the croſs; for ſo they explain that hard word Tranſubſtantiation.

Before I engage in this argument, I cannot but obſerve what an unreaſonable task we are put upon, by the bold confidence of our adverſaries, to diſpute a matter of ſenſe; which is one of thoſe things about which Ariſtotle hath long ſince pronounced there ought to be no diſpute.

It

It might well ſeem ſtrange if any man ſhould write a book to prove that an egg is not an elephant, and that a musket-bullet is not a pike: it is every whit as hard a caſe, to be put to maintain by a long diſcourſe, that what we ſee and handle and taſte to be bread is bread, and not the body of a man; and what we ſee and taſte to be wine is wine, and not blood: and if this evidence may not paſs for ſufficient without any farther proof, I do not ſee why any man, that hath confidence enough to do ſo, may not deny any thing to be what all the world ſees it is; or affirm any thing to be what all the world ſees it is not; and this without all poſſibility of being farther confuted. So that the buſineſs of Tranſubſtantiation is not a controverſy of ſcripture againſt ſcripture, or of reaſon againſt reaſon, but of downright impudence againſt the plain meaning of ſcripture, and all the ſenſe and reaſon of mankind.

It is a moſt ſelf-evident falſhood; and there is no doctrine or propoſition in the world that is of it ſelf more evidently true, than Tranſubſtantiation is evidently falſe: and yet if it were poſſible to be true, it would be the moſt ill-natured and pernicious truth in the world, becauſe it would ſuffer nothing elſe to be true; it is like the Roman-catholick church, which will needs be the whole chriſtian church, and will allow no other ſociety of chriſtians to be any part of it: ſo Tranſubſtantiation, if it be true at all, it is all truth, and nothing elſe is true; for it cannot be true unleſs our ſenſes, and the ſenſes of all mankind be deceived about their proper objects; and if this be true and certain, then nothing elſe can be ſo; for if we be not certain of what we ſee, we can be certain of nothing.

And

SERM. XXV.

And yet notwithſtanding all this, there are a company of men in the world ſo abandoned and given up by GOD to the efficacy of deluſion as in good earneſt to believe this groſs and palpable error, and to impoſe the belief of it upon the chriſtian world under no leſs penalties than of temporal death and eternal damnation. And therefore, to undeceive, if poſſible, theſe deluded ſouls, it will be neceſſary to examine the pretended grounds of ſo falſe a doctrine, and to lay open the monſtrous abſurdity of it.

And in the handling of this argument, I ſhall proceed in this plain method.

I. I ſhall conſider the pretended grounds and reaſons of the church of Rome for this doctrine.

II. I ſhall produce our objections againſt it. And if I can ſhew that there is no tolerable ground for it, and that there are invincible objections againſt it, then every man is not only in reaſon excuſed from believing this doctrine, but hath great cauſe to believe the contrary.

I. Firſt, I will conſider the pretended grounds and reaſons of the church of Rome for this doctrine. Which muſt be one or more of theſe five: Either 1ſt, the authority of ſcripture. Or 2dly, the perpetual belief of this doctrine in the chriſtian church, as an evidence that they always underſtood and interpreted our SAVIOUR's words, "this is my "body," in this ſenſe. Or 3dly, the authority of the preſent church to make and declare new articles of faith. Or 4thly, the abſolute neceſſity of ſuch a change as this in the ſacrament, to the comfort and benefit of thoſe who receive this ſacrament. Or 5thly, to magnify the power of the prieſt in being able to work ſo great a miracle. 1ſt. They

SERM. XXVI.

1ſt. They pretend for this doctrine the authority of ſcripture in thoſe words of our SAVIOUR, "this "is my body." Now to ſhew the inſufficiency of this pretence, I ſhall endeavour to make good theſe two things.

1. That there is no neceſſity of underſtanding thoſe words of our SAVIOUR in the ſenſe of Tranſubſtantiation.

2. There is a great deal of reaſon, nay that it is very abſurd and unreaſonable, not to underſtand them otherwiſe.

Firſt, that there is no neceſſity to underſtand thoſe words of our SAVIOUR in the ſenſe of Tranſubſtantiation. If there be any, it muſt be from one of theſe two reaſons. Either becauſe there are no figurative expreſſions in ſcripture, which I think no man ever yet ſaid: or elſe, becauſe a ſacrament admits of no figures; which would be very abſurd for any man to ſay, ſince it is of the very nature of a ſacrament to repreſent and exhibit ſome inviſible grace and benefit by an outward ſign and figure: and eſpecially ſince it cannot be denied, but that in the inſtitution of this very ſacrament our SAVIOUR uſeth figurative expreſſions, and ſeveral words which cannot be taken ſtrictly and literally. When he gave the cup he ſaid, "This cup is the new teſtament in my "blood, which is ſhed for you and for many, for "the remiſſion of ſins." Where firſt, the cup is put for the wine contained in the cup; or elſe, if the words be literally taken, ſo as to ſignify a ſubſtantial change, it is not of the wine but of the cup; and that, not into the blood of CHRIST but into the new teſtament or new covenant in his blood.

4.

SERM. XXVI.

Beſides, that his blood is ſaid then to be ſhed, and his body to be broken, which was not 'till his paſſion, which followed the inſtitution and firſt celebration of this ſacrament.

But that there is no neceſſity to underſtand our SAVIOUR's words in the ſenſe of Tranſubſtantiation, I will take the plain conceſſion of a great number of the moſt learned Writers of the church of Rome in this controverſy. (a) Bellarmine, (b) Suarez and (c) Vaſquez do acknowledge Scotus the great ſchoolman to have ſaid, that this doctrine cannot be evidently proved from ſcripture: and Bellarmine grants this not to be improbable; and Suarez and Vaſquez acknowledge (d) Durandus to have ſaid as much. (e) Ocham, another famous ſchoolman, ſays expreſly, "that the doctrine which holds the ſubſtance of "the bread and wine to remain after conſecration, "is neither repugnant to reaſon nor ſcripture." (f) Petrus ab Alliaco, cardinal of Cambray, ſays plainly, "that the doctrine of the ſubſtance of bread "and wine remaining after conſecration is more "eaſy and free from abſurdity, more rational, and "no ways repugnant to the authority of ſcripture;" nay more, that for the other doctrine, viz. of Tranſubſtantiation, "there is no evidence in ſcripture." (g) Gabriel Biel, another great ſchoolman and divine of their church, freely declares, "that as to "any thing expreſt in the canon of the ſcriptures, "a man may believe that the ſubſtance of bread

(a) de Euch. l. 3. c. 23. (b) in 3. diſ. 49. Qu. 75. Sect. 2. (c) in 3. part. diſp. 180. Qu. 75. art. 2. c. 15. (d) in Sent. l. 4. diſt. 11. Qu. 1. n. 15. (e) in 4. Sent. Q. 5. & Quodl. 4. Q. 3. (f) in 4. Sent. Q. 6. art 2. (g) in canon Miſſ. Lect. 40.

"and

SERM. XXVI.

" and wine doth remain after conſecration:" and therefore he reſolves the belief of Tranſubſtantiation into ſome other revelation, beſides ſcripture, which he ſuppoſeth the church had about it. Cardinal (h) Cajetan confeſſeth, " that the goſpel doth " no where expreſs that the bread is changed " into the body of CHRIST; that we have this " from the authority of the church:" nay he goes farther, " that there is nothing in the goſpel which " enforceth any man to underſtand theſe words of " CHRIST, this is my body, in a proper and not " in a metaphorical ſenſe; but the church having " underſtood them in a proper ſenſe, they are to be " ſo explained," which words in the Roman edition of Cajetan are expunged by order of Pope (i) Pius V. Cardinal (k) Contarenus, and (l) Melchior Canus one of the beſt and moſt judicious writers that church ever had, reckon this doctrine among thoſe " which are " not ſo expreſly found in ſcripture." I will add but one more of great authority in the church, and a reputed martyr, (m) Fiſher biſhop of Rocheſter, who ingenuouſly confeſſeth that in the words of the inſtitution " there is not one word from whence the " true preſence of the fleſh and blood of CHRIST " in our maſs can be proved." So that we need not much contend that this doctrine hath no certain foundation in Scripture, when this is ſo fully and frankly acknowledged by our adverſaries themſelves.

(h) in Aquin. 3. part. Qu. 75. art. 1. (i) Ægid. Conic. de Sacram. Q. 75. art. 1. n. 13. (k) de Sacram. l. 2. c 3. (l) Loc. Theolog. l. 3. c. 3. (m) contra captiv. Babylon. c. 10. n. 2.

SERM. XXVI.

Secondly, if there be no neceſſity of underſtanding our SAVIOUR's words in the ſenſe of Tranſubſtantiation, I am ſure there is a great deal of reaſon to underſtand them otherwiſe. Whether we conſider the like expreſſions in ſcripture; as where our SAVIOUR ſays he is the door and the true vine (which the church of Rome would mightily have triumph'd in, had it been ſaid "this is my true body.") And ſo likewiſe where the church is ſaid to be CHRIST's body; and the rock which followed the Iſraelites to be CHRIST, 1 Cor. x. 4. "They drank of that rock "which followed them, and that rock was CHRIST:" all which, and innumerable more like expreſſions in ſcripture, every man underſtands in a figurative, and not in a ſtrictly literal and abſurd ſenſe. And it is very well known, that in the hebrew language things are commonly ſaid to be that which they do ſignify and repreſent; and there is not in that language a more proper and uſual way of expreſſing a thing to ſignify ſo and ſo, than to ſay that it is ſo and ſo. Thus Joſeph expounded Pharaoh's dream to him, Gen. xli. 26. ſays, "the ſeven good kine are ſeven "years, and the ſeven good ears of corn are ſeven "years," that is, they ſignified or repreſented ſeven years of plenty; and ſo Pharaoh underſtood him, and ſo would any man of ſenſe underſtand the like expreſſions: nor do I believe that any ſenſible man who had never heard of Tranſubſtantiation being grounded upon theſe words of our SAVIOUR, "this "is my body," would upon reading the inſtitution of the ſacrament in the goſpel ever have imagin'd any ſuch thing to be meant by our SAVIOUR in thoſe words; but would have underſtood his meaning to have

have been " this bread signifies my body, this cup " signifies my blood; and this which you see me " now do, do ye hereafter for a memorial of me:" but surely it would never have entred into any man's mind to have thought that our SAVIOUR did literally hold himself in his hand, and give away himself from himself with his own hands. Or whether we compare these words of our SAVIOUR with the ancient form of the passover used by the Jews from Ezra's time, as (*n*) Justin Martyr tells us, τοῦτο τὸ πάσχα ὁ σωτὴρ ἡμῶν καὶ ἡ καταφυγὴ ἡμῶν, " this pas- " sover is our SAVIOUR and our refuge:" not that they believed the paschal lamb to be substantially changed either into GOD their SAVIOUR who delivered them out of the land of Egypt, or into the MESSIAS the SAVIOUR whom they expected, and who was signified by it: but this lamb which they did eat did represent to them and put them in mind of that salvation which GOD wrought for their fathers in Egypt, when by the slaying of a lamb and sprinkling the blood of it upon their doors their first-born were passed over and spared; and did likewise foreshew the salvation of the MESSIAS, " the " lamb of GOD that was to take away the sins of the " world." SERM. XXVI.

And nothing is more common in all languages than to give the name of the thing signified to the sign: as the delivery of a deed or writing under hand and seal is call'd a conveyance or making over of such an estate, and it is really so; not the delivery of mere wax and parchment, but the conveyance of a real estate; as truly and really to all effects and

(*n*) Dialog. cum Tryp. p. 297, Edit. Paris. 1639.

purposes

SERM. XXVI.

purpoſes of law, as if the very material houſes and lands themſelves could be and were actually delivered into my hands: in like manner the names of the things themſelves made over to us in the new covenant of the goſpel between GOD and man, are given to the ſigns or ſeals of that covenant. By baptiſm chriſtians are ſaid to be "made partakers of the "HOLY GHOST," Heb. vi. 4. And by the ſacrament of the LORD's ſupper we are ſaid to communicate, or to be made partakers of the body of CHRIST which was broken, and of his blood which was ſhed for us, that is, of the real benefits of his death and paſſion. And thus St. Paul ſpeaks of this ſacrament, 1 Cor. x. 16. "The cup of bleſſing which "we bleſs, is it not the communion of the blood of "CHRIST? the bread which we break, is it not "the communion of the body of CHRIST?" But ſtill it is bread, and he ſtill calls it ſo, ver. 17. "for "we being many, are one bread and one body; for "we are partakers of that one bread." The church of Rome might, if they pleaſed, as well argue from hence, that all chriſtians are ſubſtantially changed firſt into bread, and then into the natural body of CHRIST by their participation of the ſacrament, becauſe they are ſaid thereby to be "one bread and one "body." And the ſame apoſtle in the next chapter, after he had ſpoken of the conſecration of the elements, ſtill calls them the bread and the cup, in three verſes together, "As often as ye eat this bread "and drink this cup, ver. 26. Whoſoever ſhall eat "this bread and drink this cup of the LORD un-"worthily, ver. 27. But let a man examine himſelf, "and ſo let him eat of that bread and drink of that "cup,

" cup, ver. 28." And our SAVIOUR himſelf when he had ſaid " this is my blood of the new teſta- " ment," immediately adds, " * but I ſay unto you, " I will not henceforth drink of this fruit of the " vine, until I drink it new with you in my FA- " THER's kingdom," that is, not 'till after his reſurrection, which was the firſt ſtep of his exaltation into the kingdom given him by his FATHER, when the ſcripture tells us he did eat and drink with his diſciples. But that which I obſerve from our SAVIOUR's words is, that after the conſecration of the cup and the delivering of it to his diſciples to drink of it, he tells them that he would thenceforth drink no more of that fruit of the vine, which he had now drank with them, 'till after his reſurrection. From whence it is plain that it was the fruit of the vine, real wine, which our SAVIOUR drank of, and communicated to his diſciples in the ſacrament.

SERM. XXVI.

* Matth. xxvi. 19.

Beſides, if we conſider that he celebrated this ſacrament before his paſſion, it is impoſſible theſe words ſhould be underſtood literally of the natural body and blood of CHRIST; becauſe it was his body broken and his blood ſhed which he gave to his diſciples, which if we underſtand literally of his natural body broken and his blood ſhed, then theſe words, " this " is my body which is broken, and this is my blood " which is ſhed," could not be true, becauſe his body was then whole and unbroken, and his blood not then ſhed; nor could it be a propitiatory ſacrifice (as they affirm this ſacrament to be) unleſs they will ſay that propitiation was made before CHRIST ſuffer'd: and it is likewiſe impoſſible that the diſciples ſhould underſtand theſe words literally, becauſe they not only

SERM. XXVI.

ly plainly ſaw that what he gave them was bread and wine, but they ſaw likewiſe as plainly that it was not his body which was given, but his body which gave that which was given; not his body broken and his blood ſhed, becauſe they ſaw him alive at that very time, and beheld his body whole and unpierc'd; and therefore they could not underſtand theſe words literally: if they did, can we imagine that the diſciples, who upon all other occaſions were ſo full of queſtions and objections, ſhould make no difficulty of this matter? nor ſo much as ask our SAVIOUR, how can theſe things be? that they ſhould not tell him, we ſee this to be bread and that to be wine, and we ſee thy body to be diſtinct from both; we ſee thy body not broken, and thy blood not ſhed.

From all which it muſt needs be very evident to any man that will impartially conſider things, how little reaſon there is to underſtand thoſe words of our SAVIOUR, "this is my body, and this is my blood," in the ſenſe of Tranſubſtantiation; nay, on the contrary, that there is very great reaſon and an evident neceſſity to underſtand them otherwiſe. I proceed to ſhew,

2dly, That this doctrine is not grounded upon the perpetual belief of the chriſtian church, which the church of Rome vainly pretends as an evidence that the church did always underſtand and interpret our SAVIOUR's words in this ſenſe.

To manifeſt the groundleſneſs of this pretence, I ſhall, 1. ſhew by plain teſtimony of the fathers in ſeveral ages, that this doctrine was not the belief of the ancient chriſtian church. 2. I ſhall ſhew the time and occaſion of its coming in, and by what degrees

it

it grew up and was establish'd in the Roman church. SERM. XXVI.
3. I shall answer their great pretended demonstration, that this always was and must have been the constant belief of the christian church.

1. I shall shew by plain testimonies of the fathers in several ages, for above five hundred years after CHRIST, that this doctrine was not the belief of the ancient christian church. I deny not but that the fathers do, and that with great reason, very much magnify the wonderful mystery and efficacy of this sacrament, and frequently speak of a great supernatural change made by the divine benediction; which we also readily acknowledge. They say indeed, that the elements of bread and wine do by the divine blessing become to us the body and blood of CHRIST: but they likewise say that the names of the things signified are given to the signs; that the bread and wine do still remain in their proper nature and substance, and that they are turn'd into the substance of our bodies; that the body of CHRIST in the sacrament is not his natural body, but the sign and figure of it; not that body which was crucified, nor that blood which was shed upon the cross; and that it is impious to understand the eating of the flesh of the SON of man and drinking his blood literally; all which are directly opposite to the doctrine of Transubstantiation, and utterly inconsistent with it. I will select but some few testimonies of many things which I might bring to this purpose.

I begin with Justin Martyr, who says expressly, "that (*o*) our blood and flesh are nourished by the

(*o*) Apol. 2. p. 98. Edit. Paris. 1636.

SERM. XXVI.

" converſion of that food which we receive in the eu-
" chariſt :" but that cannot be the natural body and blood of CHRIST, for no man will ſay that that is converted into the nouriſhment of our bodies.

The ſecond is (*p*) Irenæus, who ſpeaking of this ſacrament ſays, " that the bread which is from the " earth, receiving the divine invocation, is now no " longer common bread, but the eucharift (or ſacra-" ment) conſiſting of two things, the one earthly, " the other heavenly." He ſays it is no longer common bread, but after invocation or conſecration it becomes the ſacrament, that is, bread ſanctified, conſiſting of two things, an earthly and an heavenly ; the earthly thing is bread, and the heavenly is the divine bleſſing which by the invocation or conſecration is added to it. And (*q*) elſewhere he hath this paſſage, " when therefore the cup that is mix'd (that is, " of wine and water) and the bread that is broken " receives the word of GOD, it becomes the eucha-" riſt of the blood and body of CHRIST, of which " the ſubſtance of our fleſh is increaſed and conſiſts ;" but if that which we receive in the ſacrament do nouriſh our bodies, it muſt be bread and wine, and not the natural body and blood of CHRIST. There is another remarkable teſtimony of Irenæus, which though it be not now extant in thoſe works of his which remain, yet hath been preſerv'd by (*r*) Oecumenius, and it is this ; " when (ſays he) the greeks " had taken ſome ſervants of the chriſtian catechu-" meni (that is, ſuch as had not been admitted to " the ſacrament) and afterwards urged them by vio-

(*p*) Lib. 4. c. 24. (*q*) Lib. 5. c. 31. (*r*) Comment. in 1 Pet. c. 3.

" lence

" lence to tell them ſome of the ſecrets of the chri- SERM. XXVI.
" ſtians, theſe ſervants having nothing to ſay that
" might gratify thoſe who offered violence to them,
" except only that they had heard from their maſters,
" that the divine communion was the blood and bo-
" dy of CHRIST, they thinking that it was really
" blood and fleſh, declar'd as much to thoſe that
" queſtioned them. The greeks taking this as if it
" were really done by the chriſtians, diſcovered it to
" others of the greeks; who hereupon put Sanctus
" and Blandina to the torture to make them confeſs
" it." To whom Blandina boldly anſwered, " How
" could they endure to do this, who by way of exer-
" ciſe (or abſtinence) do not eat that fleſh which
" may lawfully be eaten?" By which it appears that this which they would have charg'd upon chriſtians, as if they had literally eaten the fleſh and blood of CHRIST in the ſacrament, was a falſe accuſation which theſe martyrs denied, ſaying they were ſo far from that, that they for their part did not eat any fleſh at all.

The next is Tertullian, who proves againſt Marcion the heretick, that the body of our SAVIOUR was not a mere phantaſm and appearance, but a real body, becauſe the ſacrament is a figure and image of his body; and if there be an image of his body he muſt have a real body, otherwiſe the ſacrament would be an image of an image. His words are theſe, (*s*) " the bread which our SAVIOUR took and
" diſtributed to his diſciples he made his own body,
" ſaying, this is my body, that is, the image or fi-
" gure of my body. But it could not have been

(*s*) Adverſ. Marcionem, l. 4. p 571. Edit. Rigal. Pariſ. 1634.

SERM. XXVI.

" the figure of his body, if there had not been a " true and real body." And arguing againſt the ſcepticks who denied the certainty of ſenſe, he uſeth this argument: that if we queſtion our ſenſes, we may doubt whether our bleſſed SAVIOUR were not deceived in what he heard, and ſaw, and touched. (*t*) " He might (ſays he) be deceived in the " voice from heaven, in the ſmell of the ointment " with which he was anointed againſt his burial, " and in the taſte of the wine which he conſecrated " in remembrance of his blood." So that it ſeems we are to truſt our ſenſes, even in the matter of the ſacrament: and if that be true, the doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation is certainly falſe.

Origen in his (*u*) comment on Matth. xv. ſpeaking of the ſacrament hath this paſſage, " That food " which is ſanctified by the word of GOD and " prayer, as to that of it which is material, goeth " into the belly and is caſt out into the draught," which none will ſurely ſay of the body of CHRIST. And afterwards he adds by way of explication, " it " is not the matter of the bread, but the words " which are ſpoken over it, which profiteth him that " worthily eateth the LORD: and this (he ſays) he " had ſpoken concerning the typical and ſymbolical " body." So that the matter of bread remaineth in the ſacrament, and this Origen calls the typical and ſymbolical body of CHRIST; and it is not the natural body of CHRIST which is there eaten, for the food eaten in the ſacrament, as to that of it which is material, goeth into the belly and is caſt out into the draught. This teſtimony is ſo very plain in

(*t*) Lib. de Anima. p. 319. (*u*) Edit. Huetii.

the

the cauſe, that Sextus Senenſis ſuſpects this place of Origen was depraved by the hereticks. Cardinal Perron is contented to allow it to be Origen's, but rejects his teſtimony becauſe he was accuſed of hereſy by ſome of the fathers, and ſays he talks like a heretick in this place. So that with much ado this teſtimony is yielded to us. The ſame father in his (x) homilies upon Leveticus ſpeaks thus, "There is "alſo in the new teſtament a letter which kills him "who doth not ſpiritually underſtand thoſe things "which are ſaid; for if we take according to the "letter that which is ſaid, EXCEPT YE EAT "MY FLESH AND DRINK MY BLOOD, this "letter kills." And this is alſo a killing teſtimony, and not to be anſwered but in Cardinal Perron's way, by ſaying he talks like a heretick. SERM. XXVI.

St. Cyprian hath a whole epiſtle (y) to Cecilius, againſt thoſe who gave the communion in water only without wine mingled with it; and his main argument againſt them is this, "that the blood of "CHRIST with which we are redeemed and quick-"ened cannot ſeem to be in the cup, when there is "no wine in the cup by which the blood of CHRIST "is repreſented:" and afterwards he ſays, "that "contrary to the evangelical and apoſtolical doc-"trine water was in ſome places offer'd (or given) "in the LORD's cup, which (ſays he) alone cannot "expreſs (or repreſent) the blood of CHRIST." And laſtly he tells us, "that by water the people "is underſtood, by wine the blood of CHRIST is "ſhewn (or repreſented) but when in the cup wa-"ter is mingled with wine the people is united to

(x) Cap. 10. (y) Ep. 65.

"CHRIST."

SERM. XXVI.

" CHRIST." So that according to this argument wine in the ſacramental cup is no otherwiſe changed into the blood of CHRIST, than the water mixed with it is changed into the people which are ſaid to be united to CHRIST.

I omit many others, and paſs to St. Auſtin in the fourth age after CHRIST. And I the rather inſiſt upon his teſtimony, becauſe of his eminent eſteem and authority in the Latin church; and he alſo calls " the elements of the ſacrament the figure and ſign " of CHRIST's body and blood." In his book againſt Adamantus the Manichee we have this expreſſion, " (z) Our LORD did not doubt to ſay, this " is my body, when he gave the ſign of his bo- " dy." And in his explication of the third Pſalm, ſpeaking of Judas whom our LORD admitted to his laſt ſupper, " in which (ſays he) (a) he com- " mended and delivered to his diſciples the figure " of his body;" language which would now be cenſur'd for hereſy in the church of Rome. Indeed he was never accuſed of hereſy, as cardinal Perron ſays Origen was, but he talks as like one as Origen himſelf. And in his comment on the 98th Pſalm, ſpeaking of the offence which the diſciples took at that ſaying of our SAVIOUR, " Except ye eat the " fleſh of the SON of man and drink his blood, " *&c.*" he brings in our SAVIOUR ſpeaking thus to them, (b) " Ye muſt underſtand ſpiritually, what " I have ſaid unto you; you are not to eat this body " which you ſee, and to drink that blood which " ſhall be ſhed by thoſe that ſhall crucify me. I

(z) Aug. Tom. 6. p. 187. Edit. Baſil. 1596. (a) Enarrat. in Pſal. Tom. 8. p. 16. (b) Id. Tom. 9. p. 1105.

have

" have commended a certain ſacrament to you, SERM.
" which being ſpirtually underſtood will give you XXVI.
" life." What more oppoſite to the doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation, than that the diſciples were not to eat that body of CHRIST which they ſaw, nor to drink that blood which was ſhed upon the croſs, but all this was to be underſtood ſpiritually and according to the nature of a ſacrament? for that body he tells us is not here but in heaven, in his comment upon theſe words, " Me ye have not always. (c) He " ſpeaks (ſays he) of the preſence of his body: ye " ſhall have me according to my providence, ac- " cording to majeſty and inviſible grace: but " according to the fleſh which the word aſſumed, " according to that which was born of the virgin " Mary, ye ſhall not have me: therefore becauſe he " converſed with his diſciples forty days, he is aſ- " cended up into heaven, and is not here."

In his 23d epiſtle; (d) " If the ſacrament (ſays " he) had not ſome reſemblance of thoſe things " whereof they are ſacraments, they would not be " ſacraments at all: but from this reſemblance they " take for the moſt part the names of the things " which they repreſent. Therefore as the ſacra- " ment of the body of CHRIST is in ſome man- " ner or ſenſe CHRIST's body, and the ſacrament " of his blood is the blood of CHRIST; ſo the ſa- " crament of faith (meaning baptiſm) is faith." Upon which words of St. Auſtin, there is this remarkable gloſs in their own canon law, " (e) The hea- " venly ſacrament which truly repreſents the fleſh " of CHRIST is called the body of CHRIST; but

(c) Id. Tract. 50. in Joan. (d) Id. Tom 2. p. 93. (e) De Conſecrat. diſt. 2. Hoc eſt.

" impro-

SERM. XXVI.

" improperly: whence it is ſaid, that after a man-
" ner, but not according to the truth of the thing,
" but the myſtery of the thing ſignified; ſo that
" the meaning is, it is called the body of CHRIST,
" that is, it ſignifies the body of CHRIST." And if this be St. Auſtin's meaning, I am ſure no Proteſtant can ſpeak more plainly againſt Tranſubſtantiation. And in the ancient canon of the maſs, before it was changed in compliance with this new doctrine, it is expreſly called " a ſacrament, a ſign,
" an image and a figure of CHRIST's body." To which I will add that remarkable paſſage of St. Auſtin cited by (f) Gratian, " That as we receive the
" ſimilitude of his death in baptiſm, ſo we may alſo
" receive the likeneſs of his fleſh and blood; that
" ſo neither may truth be wanting in the ſacrament,
" nor pagans have occaſion to make us ridiculous for
" drinking the blood of one that was ſlain."

I will mention but one teſtimony more of this father, but ſo clear a one as it is impoſſible any man in his wits that had believed Tranſubſtantiation could have utter'd. It is in his treatiſe (g) *de doctrina chriſtiana*; where laying down ſeveral rules for the right underſtanding of ſcripture, he gives this for one. " If (ſays he) the ſpeech be a precept
" forbidding ſome heinous wickedneſs or crime, or
" commanding us to do good, it is not figurative;
" but if it ſeem to command any heinous wicked-
" neſs or crime, or to forbid that which is profita-
" ble or beneficial to others, it is figurative. For
" example, except ye eat the fleſh of the SON of

(f) De Conſecrat. diſt. 2. Sect. Utrum. (g) Lib. 5. Tom. 3. P. 53.

" man

" man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you: SERM. XXVI.
" this ſeems to command a heinous wickedneſs and
" crime, therefore it is a figure; commanding us to
" communicate of the paſſion of our LORD, and
" with delight and advantage to lay up in our me-
" mory that his fleſh was crucified and wounded for
" us." So that, according to St. Auſtin's beſt skill in interpreting ſcripture, the literal eating of the fleſh of CHRIST and drinking his blood would have been a great impiety; and therefore the expreſſion is to be underſtood figuratively: not as cardinal Perron wou'd have it, only in oppoſition to the eating of his fleſh and blood in the groſs appearance of fleſh and blood, but to the real eating of his natural body and blood under any appearance whatſoever: for St. Auſtin doth not ſay, this is a figurative ſpeech wherein we are commanded really to feed upon the natural body and blood of CHRIST under the ſpecies of bread and wine, as the cardinal would underſtand him; for then the ſpeech would be literal and not figurative: but he ſays, this is a figurative ſpeech wherein we are commanded ſpiritually to feed upon the remembrance of his paſſion.

To theſe I will add but three or four teſtimonies more in the two following ages.

The firſt ſhall be of Theodoret, who ſpeaking of that (*b*) prophecy of Jacob concerning our SAVIOUR, " he waſhed his garments in wine, and his clothes " in the blood of grapes," hath theſe words, " (*i*) as " we call the myſtical fruit of the vine (that is, the " wine in the ſacrament) after conſecration the blood " of the LORD, ſo he (viz. Jacob) calls the blood of

(*b*) Gen. xlix. 11. (*i*) Dialog. 1.

SERM. XXVI.

" the true vine (viz. of CHRIST) the blood of the " grape:" but the blood of CHRIST is not literally and properly but only figuratively the blood of the grape, in the ſame ſenſe as he is ſaid to be the true vine; and therefore the wine in the ſacrament after conſecration is in like manner not literally and properly but figuratively the blood of CHRIST. And he explains this afterwards, ſaying, " that our SA- " VIOUR changed the names, and gave to his body " the name of the ſymbol or ſign, and to that ſym- " bol or ſign the name of his body; thus when he " had call'd himſelf the vine, he call'd the ſymbol " or ſign his blood;" ſo that in the ſame ſenſe that he call'd himſelf the vine, he call'd the wine, which is the ſymbol of his blood, his blood: " For, ſays " he, he would have thoſe who partake of the di- " vine myſteries not to attend to the nature of the " things which are ſeen, but by the change of names " to believe the change which is made by grace; for " he who call'd that which by nature is a body, wheat " and bread, and again likewiſe call'd himſelf the " vine, he honour'd the ſymbols with the name of " his body and blood; not changing nature, but ad- " ding grace to nature." Where you ſee he ſays expreſly, that when he call'd the ſymbols or elements of the ſacrament, viz. bread and wine, his body and blood, he made no change in the nature of the things, only added grace to nature, that is, by the divine grace and bleſſing he raiſed them to a ſpiritual and ſupernatural virtue and efficacy.

The ſecond is of the ſame Theodoret, in his ſecond dialogue between a catholick under the name of Orthodoxus, and an heretick under the name of Eraniſtes;

nistes; who maintaining that the humanity of CHRIST was chang'd into the substance of the divinity (which was the heresy of Eutyches) he illustrates the matter by this similitude. "As, says he, "the symbols of the LORD's body and blood are one "thing before the invocation of the priest, but after "the invocation are changed and become another "thing; so the body of our LORD after his ascension "is changed into the divine substance." But what says the catholick Orthodoxus to this? why, he talks just like one of cardinal Perron's hereticks: "Thou "art, says he, caught in thine own net; because the "mystical symbols after consecration do not pass out "of their own nature: for they remain in their former substance, figure and appearance, and may be "seen and handled even as before." He does not only deny the outward figure and appearance of the symbols to be chang'd, but the nature and substance of them, even in the proper and strictest sense of the word substance; and it was necessary so to do, otherwise he had not given a pertinent answer to the similitude urg'd against him. SERM. XXVI.

The next is one of their own popes, Gelasius, who brings the same instance against the Eutychians; "(*k*) Surely, says he, the sacraments which we re- "ceive of the body and blood of our LORD are a "divine thing, so that by them we are made partakers of a divine nature, and yet it ceaseth not to "be the substance or nature of bread and wine; and "certainly the image and resemblance of CHRIST's "body and blood are celebrated in the action of the "mysteries," that is, in the sacrament. To make

(*k*) Biblioth. Patr. Tom 4.

SERM. XXVI.

this inſtance of any force againſt the Eutychians, who held that the body of CHRIST upon his aſcenſion ceas'd, and was chang'd into the ſubſtance of his divinity, it was neceſſary to deny that there was any ſubſtantial change in the ſacrament of bread and wine into the body and blood of CHRIST. So that here is an infallible authority, one of their own popes, expreſly againſt Tranſubſtantiation.

The laſt teſtimony I ſhall produce is of Facundus an African biſhop, who lived in the 6th century. Upon occaſion of juſtifying an expreſſion of one who had ſaid, "that CHRIST alſo received the adoption "of ſons," he reaſons thus. "(*l*) CHRIST vouch-"ſafed to receive the ſacrament of adoption both "when he was circumciſed and baptiſed: and the "ſacrament of adoption may be called adoption, "as the ſacrament of his body and blood, which is "in the conſecrated bread and cup, is by us called "his body and blood: not that the bread (ſays he) "is properly his body and the cup his blood, but "becauſe they contain in them the myſteries of his "body and blood; hence alſo our LORD himſelf "called the bleſſed bread and cup which he gave to "his diſciples his body and blood." Can any man after this believe, that it was then, and had ever been, the univerſal and received doctrine of the chriſtian church, that the bread and wine in the ſacrament are ſubſtantially changed into the proper and natural body and blood of CHRIST?

By theſe plain teſtimonies which I have produced, and I might have brought a great many more to the ſame purpoſe, it is I think evident beyond all denial,

(*l*) Facund. p. 144. edit. Pariſ. 1676.

that

SERM. XXVI.

that Tranſubſtantiation hath not been the perpetual belief of the chriſtian church. And this likewiſe is acknowledged by many great and learned men of the Roman church. (*m*) Scotus acknowledgeth that this doctrine was not always thought neceſſary to be believed, but that the neceſſity of believing it was conſequent to that declaration of the church made in the council of Lateran under pope Innocent III. And (*n*) Durandus freely diſcovers his inclination "to "have believed the contrary, if the church had not "by that determination obliged men to believe it." (*o*) Tonſtal biſhop of Durham alſo yields "that be- "fore the Lateran council men were at liberty as to "the manner of CHRIST's preſence in the ſacra- "ment." And (*p*) Eraſmus, who lived and died in the communion of the Roman church, and than whom no man was better read in the ancient fathers, doth confeſs, "that it was late before the church de- "fined Tranſubſtantiation, unknown to the ancients "both name and thing." And (*q*) Alphonſus à Caſtro ſays plainly, "that concerning the Tranſubſtan- "tiation of the bread into the body of CHRIST, "there is ſeldom any mention in the ancient wri- "ters." And who can imagine that theſe learned men would have granted the ancient church and fathers to have been ſo much ſtrangers to this doctrine, had they thought it to have been the perpetual belief of the church? I ſhall now in the

Second place, give an account of the particular time and occaſion of the coming in of this doctrine,

(*m*) In Sent. l. 4. diſt. 11. q. 3. (*n*) In Sent. l. 4. diſt. 11. q. 1. n. 15. (*o*) De Euchar. l. 1. p. 146. (*p*) In 1 Epiſt. ad Corinth. c. 7. citante etiam Salmerone, Tom. 9. Tract. 16. p. 108. (*q*) De Hæreſ. l. 8.

and

SERM. XXVI.

and by what ſteps and degrees it grew up and was advanced into an article of faith in the Romiſh church. The doctrine of the corporeal preſence of CHRIST was firſt ſtarted upon occaſion of the diſpute about the worſhip of images, in oppoſition whereto the ſynod of Conſtantinople about the year 750 did argue thus, That our LORD having left us no other image of himſelf but the ſacrament, in which the ſubſtance of bread is the image of his body, we ought to make no other image of our LORD. In anſwer to this argument the ſecond Council of Nice, in the year 787, did declare, "that the ſacra-"ment after conſecration is not the image and anti-"type of CHRIST's body and blood, but is proper-"ly his body and blood." So that the corporeal preſence of the body of CHRIST in the ſacrament, was firſt brought in to ſupport the ſtupid worſhip of images: and indeed it could never have come in upon a more proper occaſion, nor have been applied to a fitter purpoſe.

And here I cannot but take notice how well this agrees with (*r*) Bellarmine's obſervation, "that none "of the ancients who wrote of hereſies, hath put "this error (viz. of denying Tranſubſtantiation) in his "catalogue; nor did any of the ancients diſpute "againſt this error for the firſt 600 years." Which is very true, becauſe there could be no occaſion then to diſpute againſt thoſe who denied Tranſubſtantiation, ſince, as I have ſhewn, this doctrine was not in being, unleſs among the Eutychian Hereticks, for the firſt 600 years and more. But (*s*) Bellarmine goes on and tells us, "that the firſt who call'd in

(*r*) De Euchariſt. l. 1. c. 1. (*s*) Ibid.

"queſtion

" queſtion the truth of the body of the LORD in " the euchariſt were the ICONOMACHI (the op- " poſers of images) after the year 700, in the coun- " cil of Conſtantinople; for theſe ſaid there was " one image of CHRIST inſtituted by CHRIST him- " ſelf, viz. the bread and wine in the euchariſt, " which repreſents the body and blood of CHRIST: " wherefore from that time the Greek writers of- " ten admoniſh us that the euchariſt is not the fi- " gure or image of the body of the LORD, but " his true body, as appears from the ſeventh Synod;" which agrees moſt exactly with the account which I have given of the firſt riſe of this doctrine, which began with the corporeal preſence of CHRIST in the ſacrament, and afterwards proceeded to Tranſubſtantiation. SERM. XXVI.

And as this was the firſt occaſion of introducing this doctrine among the Greeks, ſo in the Latin or Roman church Paſcaſius Radbertus, firſt a monk, and afterwards abbot of Corbey, was the firſt broacher of it, in the year 818.

And for this, beſides the evidence of hiſtory, we have the acknowledgment of two very eminent perſons in the church of Rome, Bellarmine and Sirmondus, who do in effect confeſs that this Paſcaſius was the firſt who wrote to purpoſe upon this argument. (t) Bellarmine in theſe words, " This " author was the firſt who hath ſeriouſly and copi- " ouſly written concerning the truth of CHRIST's " body and blood in the euchariſt:" and (u) Sirmondus in theſe, " He ſo firſt explained the genu- " ine ſenſe of the catholick church, that he opened

(t) De Scriptor. Eccleſ. (u) In vita Paſcaſii.

" the

SERM. XXVI.

" the way to the reſt, who afterwards in great num-
" bers wrote upon the ſame argument : " but though Sirmondus is pleaſed to ſay that he only firſt explained the ſenſe of the catholick church in this point, yet it is very plain from the records of that age which are left to us, that this was the firſt time that this doctrine was broached in the Latin church ; and it met with great oppoſition in that age, as I ſhall have occaſion hereafter to ſhew. For Rabanus Maurus archbiſhop of Mentz, about the year 847, reciting the very words of Paſcaſius wherein he had delivered this doctrine, hath this remarkable paſſage concerning the novelty of it; " (x) Some, " ſays he, of late, not having a right opinion con-
" cerning the ſacrament of the body and blood of
" our LORD, have ſaid that this is the body and
" blood of our LORD, which was born of the vir-
" gin Mary, and in which our LORD ſuffered up-
" on the croſs, and roſe from the dead : which er-
" ror, ſays he, we have oppos'd with all our might." From whence it is plain, by the teſtimony of one of the greateſt and moſt learned biſhops of that age, and of eminent reputation for piety, that what is now the very doctrine of the church of Rome concerning the ſacrament, was then eſteem'd an error broach'd by ſome particular perſons, but was far from being the generally receiv'd doctrine of that age. Can any one think it poſſible, that ſo eminent a perſon in the church both for piety and learning, could have condemn'd this doctrine as an error and a novelty, had it been the general doctrine of the chriſtian church, not only in that but in all

(x) Epiſt. ad Heribaldum, c. 33.

former

former ages; and no cenſure paſs'd upon him for that which is now the great burning article in the church of Rome, and eſteemed by them one of the greateſt and moſt pernicious hereſies? SERM. XXVI.

Afterwards in the year 1059, when Berengarius in France and Germany had rais'd a freſh oppoſition againſt this doctrine, he was compell'd to recant it by pope Nicholas and the council at Rome, in theſe words, "(y) That the bread and wine which "are ſet upon the altar, after the conſecration are "not only the ſacrament, but the true body and "blood of our LORD JESUS CHRIST; and are "ſenſibly, not only in the ſacrament, but in truth, "handled and broken by the hands of the prieſt, and "ground or bruiſed by the teeth of the faithful." But it ſeems the pope and his council were not then skilful enough to expreſs themſelves rightly in this matter; for the gloſs upon the canon law ſays expreſly: "(z) That unleſs we underſtand theſe words "of BERENGARIUS (that is in truth of the "pope and his council) in a ſound ſenſe, we ſhall "fall into a greater hereſy than that of BEREN-"GARIUS; for we do not make parts of the body "of CHRIST." The meaning of which gloſs I cannot imagine, unleſs it be this, that the body of CHRIST, though it be in truth broken, yet it is not broken into parts, (for we do not make parts of the body of CHRIST) but into wholes: now this new way of breaking a body, not into parts but in-

(y) Gratian de Conſecrat. diſtinct. 2. Lanfranc. de corp. & ſang. Domini, c. 5. Guil. Mund. de ſacram. Algar. de ſacram. l. 1. c 19. (z) Gloſ. Decret. de conſecrat. diſt. 2. in cap. Ego Berengarius.

SERM. XXV

to wholes, (which in good earneſt is the doctrine of the church of Rome) though to them that are able to believe Tranſubſtantiation, it may for any thing I know appear to be ſound ſenſe, yet to us that cannot believe ſo, it appears to be ſolid nonſenſe.

About twenty years after, in the year 1079, pope Gregory VII. began to be ſenſible of this abſurdity; and therefore in another council at Rome made Berengarius to recant in another form, viz. "(a) That the bread and wine which are placed "upon the altar, are ſubſtantially changed into the "true and proper and quickning fleſh and blood of "our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and after conſecra- "tion are the true body of CHRIST, which was "born of the virgin, and which being offered for the "ſalvation of the world did hang upon the croſs, "and ſits at the right hand of the FATHER."

So that from the firſt ſtarting of this doctrine in the ſecond council of Nice in the year 787, 'till the council under pope Gregory VII. in the year 1079, it was almoſt three hundred years that this doctrine was conteſted, and before this miſhapen monſter of Tranſubſtantiation could be lick'd into that form in which it is now ſettled and eſtabliſh'd in the church of Rome. Here then is a plain account of the firſt riſe of this doctrine, and of the ſeveral ſteps whereby it was advanced by the church of Rome into an article of the faith. I come now in the

Third place, to anſwer the great pretended demonſtration of the impoſſibility that this doctrine, if it had been new, ſhould ever have come in, in any age, and been received in the church: and

(a) Waldenſ. Tom. 2. c. 13.

conſe-

SERM. XXVI.

conſequently it muſt of neceſſity have been the perpetual belief of the church in all ages: for if it had not always been the doctrine of the church, whenever it had attempted firſt to come in, there would have been a great ſtir and buſtle about it, and the whole chriſtian world would have roſe up in oppoſition to it. But we can ſhew no ſuch time when it firſt came in, and when any ſuch oppoſition was made to it, and therefore it was always the doctrine of the church. This demonſtration monſieur Arnauld, a very learned man in France, pretends to be unanſwerable: whether it be ſo or not, I ſhall briefly examine. And,

Firſt, we do aſſign a punctual and very likely time of the firſt riſe of this doctrine, about the beginning of the ninth age; though it did not take firm root, nor was fully ſettled and eſtabliſh'd till towards the end of the eleventh. And this was the moſt likely time of all other, from the beginning of chriſtianity, for ſo groſs an error to appear; it being, by the confeſſion and conſent of their own hiſtorians, the moſt dark and diſmal time that ever happened to the chriſtian church, both for ignorance, and ſuperſtition, and vice. It came in together with idolatry, and was made uſe of to ſupport it: a fit prop and companion for it. And indeed what tares might not the enemy have ſown in ſo dark and long a night; when ſo conſiderable a part of the chriſtian world was lull'd aſleep in profound ignorance and ſuperſtition? and this agrees very well with the account which our SAVIOUR himſelf gives in the parable of the tares, of the ſpringing up of errors and corruptions in the field of the church.

SERM. XXVI.

(b) While the men ſlept the enemy did his work in the night, ſo that when they were awake they wondred how and whence the tares came; but being ſure they were there, and that they were not ſown at firſt, they concluded the enemy had done it.

Secondly, I have ſhewn likewiſe that there was conſiderable oppoſition made to this error at its firſt coming in. The general ignorance and groſs ſuperſtition of that age rendred the generality of people more quiet and ſecure, and diſpoſed them to receive any thing that came under a pretence of myſtery in religion, and of a greater reverence and devotion to the ſacrament, and that ſeemed any way to countenance the worſhip of images, for which at that time they were zealouſly concern'd. But notwithſtanding the ſecurity and paſſive temper of the people, and men moſt eminent for piety and learning in that time made great reſiſtance againſt it. I have already named Rabanus archbiſhop of Mentz, who oppos'd it as an error lately ſprung up, and which had then gained but upon ſome few perſons. To whom I may add Heribaldus biſhop of Auxerres in France, Jo. Scotus, Erigena, and Ratramus, commonly known by the name of Bertram, who at the ſame time were employed by the emperor Charles the bald to oppoſe this growing error, and wrote learnedly againſt it. And theſe were the eminent men for learning in that time. And becauſe monſieur Arnauld will not be ſatisfied unleſs there were ſome ſtir and buſtle about it, Bertram in his preface to his book tells us, " that they who accord-
" ing to their ſeveral opinions talked differently a-

(b) Matth. xiii. 14.

" bout

" bout the myſtery of CHRIST's body and blood " were divided by no ſmall ſchiſm." SERM. XXVI.

Thirdly, though for a more clear and ſatisfactory anſwer to this pretended demonſtration I have been contented to unty this knot, yet I could without all theſe pains have cut it. For ſuppoſe this doctrine had ſilently come in and without oppoſition, ſo that we could not aſſign the particular time and occaſion of its firſt riſe; yet if it be evident from the records of former ages, for above 500 years together, that this was not the ancient belief of the church; and plain alſo, that this doctrine was afterwards received in the Roman church, though we could not tell how and when it came in, yet it would be the wildeſt and moſt extravagant thing in the world to ſet up a pretended demonſtration of reaſon againſt plain experience and matter of fact. This is juſt Zeno's demonſtration of the impoſſibility of motion againſt Diogenes walking before his eyes. For this is to undertake to prove that impoſſible to have been, which moſt certainly was. Juſt thus the ſervants in the parable might have demonſtrated that the tares were wheat, becauſe they were ſure none but good ſeed was ſown at firſt, and no man could give any account of the punctual time when any tares were ſown, or by whom: and if an enemy had come to do it, he muſt needs have met with great reſiſtance and oppoſition; but no ſuch reſiſtance was made, and therefore there could be no tares in the field, but that which they called tares was certainly good wheat. At the ſame rate a man might demonſtrate that our king, his majeſty of Great Britain, is not return'd into England, nor reſtor'd

SERM. XXVI.

ſtor'd to his crown; becauſe there being ſo great and powerful an army poſſeſs'd of his lands, and therefore obliged by intereſt to keep him out, it was impoſſible he ſhould ever come in without a great deal of fighting and bloodſhed: but there was no ſuch thing, therefore he is not return'd and reſtor'd to his crown. And by the like kind of demonſtration one might prove that the turk did not invade chriſtendom laſt year, and beſiege Vienna; becauſe if he had, the moſt chriſtian king, who had the greateſt army in chriſtendom in a readineſs, would certainly have employed it againſt him; but monſieur Arnauld certainly knows no ſuch thing was done: and therefore according to his way of demonſtration, the matter of fact, ſo commonly reported and believed, concerning the turk's invaſion of chriſtendom and beſieging Vienna laſt year, was a perfect miſtake. But a man may demonſtrate till his head and heart ake, before he ſhall ever be able to prove that which certainly is, or was, never to have been. For of all ſorts of impoſſibles nothing is more evidently ſo, than to make that which hath been not to have been. All the reaſon in the world is too weak to cope with ſo tough and obſtinate a difficulty. And I have often wonder'd how a man of monſieur Arnauld's great wit and ſharp judgment could prevail with himſelf to engage in ſo bad and baffled a cauſe; or could think to defend it with ſo wooden a dagger as his demonſtration of reaſon againſt certain experience and matter of fact: a thing, if it be poſſible, of equal abſurdity with what he pretends to demonſtrate, Tranſubſtantiation it ſelf. I proceed to the

Third

Third pretended ground of this doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation; and that is, the infallible authority of the preſent church to make and declare new articles of faith. And this in truth is the ground into which the moſt of the learned men of the church did heretofore, and many do ſtill reſolve their belief of this doctrine: and, as I have already ſhewn, do plainly ſay that they ſee no ſufficient reaſon, either from ſcripture or tradition, for the belief of it: and that they ſhould have believed the contrary, had not the determination of the church obliged them otherwiſe. SERM. XXVI.

But if this doctrine be obtruded upon the world merely by virtue of the authority of the Roman church, and the declaration of the council under pope Gregory VII. or of the Lateran council under Innocent III. then it is a plain innovation in the chriſtian doctrine, and a new article of faith impos'd upon the chriſtian world. And if any church hath this power, the chriſtian faith may be enlarged and changed as often as men pleaſe; and that which is no part of our SAVIOUR's doctrine, nay, any thing, though never ſo abſurd and unreaſonable, may become an article of faith obliging all chriſtians to the belief of it, whenever the church of Rome ſhall think fit to ſtamp her authority upon it: which would make chriſtianity a moſt uncertain and endleſs thing.

The fourth pretended ground of this doctrine is, the neceſſity of ſuch a change as this in the ſacrament, to the comfort and benefit of thoſe who receive it. But there is no colour for this, if the thing be rightly conſider'd: becauſe the comfort and benefit of the ſacrament depends upon the bleſſing annexed

to

SERM. XXVI.

to the inſtitution. And as water in baptiſm, without any ſubſtantial change made in that element, may, by the divine bleſſing accompanying the inſtitution, be effectual to the waſhing away of ſin, and ſpiritual regeneration; ſo there can no reaſon in the world be given why the elements of bread and wine in the LORD's ſupper may not, by the ſame divine bleſſing accompanying this inſtitution, make the worthy receivers partakers of all the ſpiritual comfort and benefit deſigned to us thereby, without any ſubſtantial change made in thoſe elements, ſince our LORD hath told us, that "verily the fleſh profiteth nothing." So that if we could do ſo odd and ſtrange a thing as to eat the very natural fleſh and drink the blood of our LORD, I do not ſee of what greater advantage it would be to us, than what we may have by partaking of the ſymbols of his body and blood as he hath appointed "in remembrance of him." For the ſpiritual efficacy of the ſacrament doth not depend upon the nature of the thing received, ſuppoſing we receive what our LORD appointed, and receive it with a right preparation and diſpoſition of mind, but upon the ſupernatural bleſſing that goes along with it, and makes it effectual to thoſe ſpiritual ends for which it was appointed.

The fifth and laſt pretended ground of this doctrine is, to magnify the power of the prieſt in being able to work ſo great a miracle. And this with great pride and pomp is often urg'd by them as a tranſcendent inſtance of the divine wiſdom, to find out ſo admirable a way to raiſe the power and reverence of the prieſt; that he ſhould be able every day, and as often as he pleaſes, by repeating a few words

to

to work so miraculous a change, and (as they love most absurdly and blasphemously to speak) to make GOD himself.

But this is to pretend to a power above that of GOD himself, for he did not, nor cannot make himself, nor do any thing that implies a contradiction, as Transubstantiation evidently does in their pretending to make GOD. For to make that which already is, and make that now which always was, is not only vain and trifling if it could be done, but impossible, because it implies a contradiction.

And what if after all, Transubstantiation, if it were possible, and actually wrought by the priest, would yet be no miracle? For there are two things necessary to a miracle, that there be a supernatural effect wrought, and that this effect be evident to sense. So that though a supernatural effect be wrought, yet if it be not evident to sense, it is to all the ends and purposes of a miracle as if it were not; and can be no testimony or proof of any thing, because itself stands in need of another miracle to give testimony to it, and to prove that it was wrought. And neither in scripture, nor in profane authors, nor in common use of speech, is any thing call'd a miracle but what falls under the notice of our senses: a miracle being nothing else but a supernatural effect evident to sense, the great end and design whereof is to be a sensible proof and conviction to us of something that we do not see.

And for want of this condition, Transubstantiation, if it were true, would be no miracle. It would be indeed very supernatural, but for all that it would not be a sign or miracle: for a sign or miracle is al-

5.

SERM. XXVI.

ways a thing ſenſible, otherwiſe it could be no ſign. Now that ſuch a change as is pretended in Tranſubſtantiation ſhould really be wrought, and yet there ſhould be no ſign and appearance of it, is a thing very wonderful, but not to ſenſe; for our ſenſes perceive no change, the bread and wine in the ſacrament to all our ſenſes remaining juſt as they were before: and that a thing ſhould remain to all appearance juſt as it was, hath nothing at all of wonder in it: we wonder indeed when we ſee a ſtrange thing done, but no man wonders when he ſees nothing done. So that Tranſubſtantiation, if they will needs have it a miracle, is ſuch a miracle as any man may work that hath but the confidence to face men down that he works it, and the fortune to be believed: and though the church of Rome may magnify their prieſts upon account of this miracle, which they ſay they can work every day and every hour, yet I cannot underſtand the reaſon of it; for when this great work (as they call it) is done, there is nothing more appears to be done than if there were no miracle: now ſuch a miracle as to all appearance is no miracle, I ſee no reaſon why a proteſtant miniſter, as well as a popiſh prieſt, may not work as often as he pleaſes; or if he can but have the patience to let it alone, it will work itſelf. For ſurely nothing in the world is eaſier than to let a thing be as it is, and by ſpeaking a few words over it to make it juſt what it was before. Every man, every day, may work ten thouſand ſuch miracles.

And thus I have diſpatch'd the firſt part of my diſcourſe, which was to conſider the pretended grounds and reaſons of the church of Rome for this doctrine,

and

and to shew the weakness and insufficiency of them. I come in the SERM. XXVI.

Second place, to produce our objections against it. Which will be of so much the greater force, because I have already shewn this doctrine to be destitute of all divine warrant and authority, and of any other sort of ground sufficient in reason to justify it. So that I do not now object against a doctrine which hath a fair probability of divine revelation on its side, for that would weigh down all objections, which did not plainly overthrow the probability and credit of its divine revelation; but I object against a doctrine by the mere will and tyranny of men imposed upon the belief of christians, without any evidence of scripture, and against all the evidence of reason and sense.

The objections I shall reduce to these two heads. First, the infinite scandal of this doctrine to the christian religion. And secondly, the monstrous and insupportable absurdity of it.

First, the infinite scandal of this doctrine to the christian religion. And that upon these four accounts: 1. Of the stupidity of this doctrine. 2. The real barbarousness of this sacrament and rite of our religion, upon supposition of the truth of this doctrine. 3. Of the cruel and bloody consequences of it. 4. Of the danger of idolatry; which they are certainly guilty of, if this doctrine be not true.

1. Upon account of the stupidity of this doctrine. I remember that Tully, who was a man of very good sense, instanceth in the conceit of eating God as the extremity of madness, and so stupid an apprehension as he thought no man was ever guilty

SERM. XXVI.

of. " (*c*) When we call (ſays he) the fruits of the " earth Ceres, and wine Bacchus, we uſe but the " common language; but do you think any man ſo " mad as to believe that which he eats to be GOD?" It ſeems he could not believe that ſo extravagant a folly had ever entred into the mind of man. It is a very ſevere ſaying of Averroes the Arabian philoſopher (who lived after this doctrine was entertained among chriſtians) and ought to make the church of Rome bluſh, if ſhe can; " (*d*) I have travell'd (ſays " he) over the world, and have found divers ſects; " but ſo ſottiſh a ſect or law I never found, as is the " ſect of the chriſtians; becauſe with their own teeth " they devour their GOD whom they worſhip.". It was great ſtupidity in the people of Iſrael to ſay, " Come, let us make us gods;" but it was civilly " ſaid of them, " Let us make us gods that may go " before us," in compariſon of the church of Rome, who ſay, " Let us make a god that we may eat " him." So that upon the whole matter I cannot but wonder that they ſhould chooſe thus to expoſe faith to the contempt of all that are endued with reaſon. And to ſpeak the plain truth, the chriſtian religion was never ſo horribly expoſed to the ſcorn of atheiſts and infidels, as it hath been by this moſt abſurd and ſenſeleſs doctrine. But thus it was foretold " that (*e*) the man of ſin ſhould come with " power and ſigns and lying miracles, and with all " deceivableneſs of unrighteouſneſs," with all the legerdemain and juggling tricks of falſhood and impoſture; amongſt which this of Tranſubſtantiation,

(*c*) De nat Deorum. l. 3. (*d*) Dionyſ. Carthuſ. in 4. diſt. 10. art. 1. (*e*) 2 Theſſ. ii. 10.

which

which they call a miracle, and we a cheat, is one of the chief: and in all probability thoſe common juggling words of *hocus pocus*, are nothing elſe but a corruption of *hoc eſt corpus*, by way of ridiculous imitation of the prieſts of the church of Rome in their trick of Tranſubſtantiation. Into ſuch contempt by this fooliſh doctrine, and pretended miracle of theirs, have they brought the moſt ſacred and venerable myſtery of our religion.

2. It is very ſcandalous likewiſe upon account of the real barbarouſneſs of this ſacrament and rite of our religion, upon ſuppoſition of the truth of this doctrine. "Literally to eat the fleſh of the SON of "MAN, and to drink his blood," St. Auſtin, as I have ſhewed before, declares to be a great impiety. And the impiety and barbarouſneſs of the thing is not in truth extenuated, but only the appearance of it, by its being done under the ſpecies of bread and wine: for the thing they acknowledge is really done, and they believe that they verily eat and drink the natural fleſh and blood of CHRIST. And what can any man do more unworthily towards his friend? How can he poſſibly uſe him more barbarouſly, than to feaſt upon his living fleſh and blood? It is one of the greateſt wonders in the world, that it ſhould ever enter into the minds of men to put upon our SAVIOUR's words, ſo eaſily capable of a more convenient ſenſe, and ſo neceſſarily requiring it, a meaning ſo plainly contrary to reaſon, and ſenſe, and even to humanity itſelf. Had the ancient chriſtians owned any ſuch doctrine, we ſhould have heard it from the adverſaries of our religion in every page of their writings; and they would have deſired no greater

SERM. XXVI.

greater advantage againſt the chriſtians, than to have been able to hit them in the teeth with their feaſting upon the natural fleſh and blood of their LORD, and their GOD, and their beſt friend. What endleſs triumphs would they have made upon this ſubject? and with what confidence would they have ſet the cruelty uſed by chriſtians in their ſacrament, againſt their god Saturn's eating his own children, and all the cruel and bloody rites of their idolatry? But that no ſuch thing was then objected by the heathens to the chriſtians, is to a wiſe man inſtead of a thouſand demonſtrations that no ſuch doctrine was then believed.

3. It is ſcandalous alſo upon account of the cruel and bloody conſequences of this doctrine; ſo contrary to the plain laws of chriſtianity, and to one great end and deſign of this ſacrament, which is to unite chriſtians in the moſt perfect love and charity to one another: whereas this doctrine hath been the occaſion of the moſt barbarous and bloody tragedies that ever were acted in the world. For this hath been in the church of Rome the great burning article: and as abſurd and unreaſonable as it is, more chriſtians have been murdered for the denial of it than perhaps for all the other articles of their religion. And I think it may generally paſs for a true obſervation, that all ſects are commonly moſt hot and furious for thoſe things for which there is leaſt reaſon; for what men want of reaſon for their opinions, they uſually ſupply and make up in rage. And it was no more than needed to uſe this ſeverity upon this occaſion; for nothing but the cruel fear of death could in probability have driven ſo great a part of mankind

mankind into the acknowledgment of so unreasonable and senseless a doctrine. SERM. XXVI.

O blessed SAVIOUR! thou best friend and greatest lover of mankind, who can imagine thou didst ever intend that men should kill one another for not being able to believe contrary to their senses; for being unwilling to think, that thou shouldst make one of the most horrid and barbarous things that can be imagin'd a main duty and principal mystery of thy religion; for not flattering the pride and presumption of the priest who says he can make GOD, and for not complying with the folly and stupidity of the people, who are made to believe that they can eat him?

4. Upon account of the danger of idolatry; which they are certainly guilty of if this doctrine be not true, and such a change as they pretend be not made in the sacrament; for if it be not, then they worship a creature instead of the creator, GOD blessed for ever. But such a change I have shewn to be impossible; or if it could be, yet they can never be certain that it is, and consequently are always in danger of idolatry; and that they can never be certain that such a change is made, is evident; because, according to the express determination of the council of Trent, that depends upon the mind and intention of the priest, which cannot certainly be known but by revelation, which is not pretended in this case. And if they be mistaken in this change, through the knavery or crossness of the priest who will not make GOD but when he thinks fit, they must not think to excuse themselves from idolatry because they intended to worship GOD and not

SERM. XXVI.

not a creature; for ſo the Perſians might be excuſed from idolatry in worſhipping the Sun, becauſe they intend to worſhip GOD and not a creature; and ſo indeed we may excuſe all the idolatry that ever was in the world, which is nothing elſe but a miſtake of the deity, and upon that miſtake a worſhipping of ſomething as GOD which is not GOD.

II. Beſides the infinite ſcandal of this doctrine upon the accounts I have mentioned, the monſtrous abſurdities of it make it inſupportable to any religion. I am very well aſſur'd of the grounds of religion in general, and of the chriſtian religion in particular; and yet I cannot ſee that the foundations of any revealed religion, are ſtrong enough to bear the weight of ſo many and ſo great abſurdities as this doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation would load it withal. And to make this evident, I ſhall not inſiſt upon thoſe groſs contradictions, of the ſame body being in ſo many ſeveral places at once; of our SAVIOUR's giving away himſelf with his own hands to every one of his diſciples, and yet ſtill keeping himſelf to himſelf; and a thouſand more of the like nature: but to ſhew the abſurdity of this doctrine, I ſhall only ask theſe few queſtions.

1. Whether any man have, or ever had, greater evidence of the truth of any divine revelation than every man hath of the falſhood of Tranſubſtantiation? infidelity were hardly poſſible to men, if all men had the ſame evidence for the chriſtian religion which they have againſt Tranſubſtantiation, that is, the clear and irreſiſtible evidence of ſenſe. He that can once be brought to contradict or deny his ſenſes, is at an end of certainty; for what can a man be certain

certain of, if he be not certain of what he ſees? in ſome circumſtances our ſenſes may deceive us, but no faculty deceives us ſo little and ſo ſeldom: and when our ſenſes do deceive us, even that error is not to be corrected without the help of our ſenſes. SERM. XXVI.

2. Suppoſing this doctrine had been delivered in ſcripture in the very ſame words that it is decreed in the council of Trent, by what clearer evidence or ſtronger argument could any man prove to me that ſuch words were in the bible, than I can prove to him that bread and wine after conſecration are bread and wine ſtill? he could but appeal to my eyes to prove ſuch words to be in the bible, and with the ſame reaſon and juſtice might I appeal to ſeveral of his ſenſes to prove to him that the bread and wine after conſecration are bread and wine ſtill.

3. Whether it be reaſonable to imagine, that GOD ſhould make that a part of the chriſtian religion which ſhakes the main external evidence and confirmation of the whole? I mean the miracles which were wrought by our SAVIOUR and his apoſtles, the aſſurance whereof did at firſt depend upon the certainty of ſenſe. For if the ſenſes of thoſe who ſay they ſaw them were deceived, then there might be no miracles wrought; and conſequently it may juſtly be doubted whether that kind of confirmation which GOD hath given to the chriſtian religion would be ſtrong enough to prove it, ſuppoſing Tranſubſtantiation to be a part of it: becauſe every man hath as great evidence that Tranſubſtantiation is falſe, as he hath that the chriſtian religion is true. Suppoſe then Tranſubſtantiation to be part of the chriſtian doctrine, it muſt have the ſame confirmation with the whole,

SERM. XXVI.

whole, and that is miracles: but of all doctrines in the world it is peculiarly incapable of being proved by a miracle. For if a miracle were wrought for the proof of it, the very ſame aſſurance which any man hath of the truth of the miracle, he hath of the falſhood of the doctrine, that is the clear evidence of his ſenſes. For that there is a miracle wrought to prove, "that what he ſees in the ſacra-"ment is not bread but the body of CHRIST," there is only the evidence of ſenſe; and there is the very ſame evidence to prove, "that what he ſees in "the ſacrament is not the body of CHRIST but "bread." So that here would ariſe a new controverſy, whether a man ſhould rather believe his ſenſes giving teſtimony againſt the doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation, or bearing witneſs to a miracle wrought to confirm that doctrine; there being the very ſame evidence againſt the truth of the doctrine, which there is for the truth of the miracle: and then the argument for Tranſubſtantiation, and the objection againſt it, would juſt balance one another; and conſequently Tranſubſtantiation is not to be proved by a miracle, becauſe that would be, to prove to a man by ſomething that he ſees, that he doth not ſee what he ſees. And if there were no other evidence that Tranſubſtantiation is no part of the chriſtian doctrine, this would be ſufficient, that what proves the one doth as much overthrow the other; and that miracles which are certainly the beſt and higheſt external proof of chriſtianity, are the worſt proof in the world of Tranſubſtantiation, unleſs a man can renounce his ſenſes at the ſame time that he relies upon them. For a man cannot believe a miracle without

without relying upon ſenſe, nor Tranſubſtantiation without renouncing it. So that never were any two things ſo ill coupled together as the doctrine of chriſtianity and that of Tranſubſtantiation, becauſe they draw ſeveral ways, and are ready to ſtrangle one another: for the main evidence of the chriſtian doctrine, which is miracles, is reſolved into the certainty of ſenſe, but this evidence is clear and point-blank againſt Tranſubſtantiation.

4. And laſtly, I would ask what we are to think of the argument which our SAVIOUR uſed to convince his diſciples after his reſurrection that his body was really riſen, and that they were not deluded by a ghoſt or apparition? Is it a neceſſary and concluſive argument or not? (f) "And he ſaid "unto them, why are ye troubled? and why do "thoughts ariſe in your hearts? behold my hands "and my feet, that it is I my ſelf; for a ſpirit "hath not fleſh and bones, as ye ſee me have." But now if we ſuppoſe with the church of Rome the doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation to be true, and that he had inſtructed his diſciples in it juſt before his death, ſtrange thoughts might juſtly have riſen in their hearts, and they might have ſaid to him; LORD, it is but a few days ago ſince thou didſt teach us not to believe our ſenſes, but directly contrary to what we ſaw, viz. that the bread which thou gaveſt us in the ſacrament, though we ſaw and handled it, and taſted it to be bread, yet was not bread, but thine own natural body; and now thou appealeſt to our ſenſes to prove that this is thy body which we now ſee. If ſeeing and handling be an unqueſtionable evidence that things are what they

(f) Luke xxiv. 38, 39.

SERM. XXVI.

appear to our ſenſes, then we were deceived before in the ſacrament; and if they be not, then we are not ſure now that this is thy body which we now ſee and handle, but it may be perhaps bread under the appearance of fleſh and bones; juſt as in the ſacrament, that which we ſaw and handled, and taſted to be bread, was thy fleſh and bones under the form and appearance of bread. Now upon this ſuppoſition it would have been a hard matter to have quieted the thoughts of his diſciples: For if the argument which our SAVIOUR uſed did certainly prove to them, that what they ſaw and handled was his body, his very natural fleſh and bones, becauſe they ſaw and handled them, (which it were impious to deny) it would as ſtrongly prove, that what they ſaw and received before in the ſacrament was not the natural body and blood of CHRIST, but real bread and wine: and conſequently, that according to our SAVIOUR's arguing after his reſurrection they had no reaſon to believe Tranſubſtantiation before. For that very argument by which our SAVIOUR proves the reality of his body after his reſurrection doth as ſtrongly prove the reality of bread and wine after conſecration. But our SAVIOUR's argument was moſt infallibly good and true, and therefore the doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation is undoubtedly falſe.

Upon the whole matter I ſhall only ſay this, that ſome other Points between us and the church of Rome are managed by ſome kind of wit and ſubtilty, but this of Tranſubſtantiation is carried out by mere dint of impudence and facing down of mankind.

And

And of this the more diſcerning perſons of that church are of late grown ſo ſenſible that they would now be glad to be rid of this odious and ridiculous doctrine. But the council of Trent hath rivetted it ſo faſt into their religion, and made it ſo neceſſary and eſſential a point of their belief, that they cannot now part with it if they would; it is like a milſtone hung about the neck of popery, which will ſink it at the laſt.

And though ſome of their greateſt wits, as cardinal Perron, and of late monſieur Arnauld, have undertaken the defence of it in great volumes; yet it is an abſurdity of that monſtrous and maſſy weight, that no human authority or wit is able to ſupport it. It will make the very pillars of St. Peter's crack, and requires more volumes to make it good than would fill the Vatican.

And now I would apply my ſelf to the poor deluded people of that church, if they were either permitted by their prieſts, or durſt venture without their leave, to look into their religion and to examine the doctrines of it. Conſider, and ſhew your ſelves men. Do not ſuffer your ſelves any longer to be led blindfold, and by an implicit faith in your prieſts, into the belief of nonſenſe and contradiction. Think it enough and too much to let them rook you out of your money for pretended pardons and counterfeit relicks, but let not the authority of any prieſt or church perſuade you out of your ſenſes. Credulity is certainly a fault as well as infidelity: and he who ſaid, "Bleſſed are they that have not "ſeen, and yet have believed," hath no where ſaid, "Bleſſed are they that have ſeen, and yet have not "believed;"

SERM. XXVI.

" believed ;" much leſs, " Bleſſed are they that be-
" lieve directly contrary to what they ſee."

To conclude this diſcourſe. By what hath been ſaid upon this argument it will appear, with how little truth, and reaſon, and regard to the intereſt of our common chriſtianity, it is ſo often ſaid by our Adverſaries, that there are as good arguments for the belief of Tranſubſtantiation as of the doctrine of the Trinity: when they themſelves do acknowledge with us that the doctrine of the Trinity is grounded upon the Scriptures, and that according to the interpretation of them by the conſent of the ancient fathers: but their doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation I have plainly ſhewn to have no ſuch ground, and that this is acknowledged by very learned men of their own church. And this doctrine of theirs being firſt plainly proved by us to be deſtitute of all divine warrant and authority, our objections againſt it from the manifold contradictions of it to reaſon and ſenſe, are ſo many demonſtrations of the falſhood of it. Againſt all which they have nothing to put in the oppoſite ſcale but the infallibility of their church, for which there is even leſs colour of proof from ſcripture than for Tranſubſtantiation it ſelf. But ſo fond are they of their own innovations and errors, that rather than the dictates of their church, how groundleſs and abſurd ſoever, ſhould be called in queſtion; rather than not have their will of us in impoſing upon us what they pleaſe, they will overthrow any article of the chriſtian faith, and ſhake the very foundations of our common religion: a clear evidence that the church of Rome is not the true mother,

ſince

since she can be so well contented that christianity should be destroyed rather than the point in question should be decided against her.

SERMON XXVII.

The protestant religion vindicated from the charge of singularity and novelty.

Preached before the KING at *Whitehall*, *April* 2, 1680.

JOSHUA xxiv. 15.

If it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, *choose you this day whom you will serve.*

SERM. XXVII.

THESE are the words of Joshua; who, after he had brought the people of Israel thro' many difficulties and hazards into the quiet possession of the promised land, like a good prince and father of his country, was very solicitous, before his death, to lay the firmest foundation he could devise of the future happiness and prosperity of that people, in whose present settlement he had, by the blessing of GOD, been so successful an instrument.

And because he knew no means so effectual to this end, as to confirm them in the religion and worship of the true GOD, who had by so remarkable and miraculous

SERM. XXVII.

raculous a providence planted them in that good land; he ſummons the people together, and repreſents to them all thoſe conſiderations that might engage them and their poſterity for ever to continue in the true religion. He tells them what GOD had already done for them, and what he had promiſed to do more, if they would be faithful to him: and on the other hand, what fearful calamities he had threatned, and would certainly bring upon them, in caſe they ſhould tranſgreſs his covenant, and go and ſerve other gods. And after many arguments to this purpoſe, he concludes with this earneſt exhortation at the 14th verſe, "Now therefore fear the LORD, "and ſerve him in ſincerity and in truth, and put "away the gods which your fathers ſerved on the "other ſide of the flood, and in Egypt; and ſerve "ye the LORD."

And to give the greater weight and force to this exhortation, he does by a very eloquent kind of inſinuation as it were once more ſet them at liberty, and leave them to their own election: it being the nature of man to ſtick more ſtedfaſtly to that which is not violently impoſed, but is our free and deliberate choice: "And if it ſeem evil unto you to "ſerve the LORD, chooſe you this day whom you "will ſerve."

Which words offer to our conſideration theſe following obſervations.

1. It is here ſuppoſed that a nation muſt be of ſome religion or other. Joſhua does not put this to their choice, but takes it for granted.

2. That though religion be a matter of choice, yet it is neither a thing indifferent in itſelf, nor to a

good

good governor, what religion his people are of. Joſhua does not put it to them as if it were an indifferent matter whether they ſerved GOD or idols; he had ſufficiently declared before which of theſe was to be preferred.

3. The true religion may have ſeveral prejudices and objections againſt it: "If it ſeem evil unto you "to ſerve the LORD," intimating that upon ſome accounts, and to ſome perſons, it may appear ſo.

4. That the true religion hath thoſe real advantages on its ſide, that it may ſafely be referr'd to any conſiderate man's choice. And this ſeems to be the true reaſon why Joſhua refers it to them: not that he thought the thing indifferent, but becauſe he was fully ſatisfied that the truth and goodneſs of the one above the other was ſo evident, that there was no danger that any prudent man ſhould make a wrong choice, "If it ſeem evil unto you to ſerve the "LORD, chooſe you this day whom you will "ſerve;" intimating, that the plain difference of the things in competition would direct them what to chooſe.

5. The examples of princes and governors hath a very great influence upon the people in matters of religion. This I collect from the context: and Joſhua was ſenſible of it; and therefore though he firmly believed the true religion to have thoſe advantages that would certainly recommend it to every impartial man's judgment, yet knowing that the multitude are eaſily impoſed upon and led into error he thought fit to incline and determine them by his own example, and by declaring his own peremptory reſolution in the caſe, "Chooſe you this day whom you will "ſerve;

5.

SERM. XXVII.

" ſerve; as for me and my houſe we will ſerve the " LORD." Laws are a good ſecurity to religion; but the example of governors is a living law, which ſecretly overrules the minds of men, and bends them to a compliance with it.

——— *Non ſic inflectere ſenſus*
Humanos edicta valent, ut vita Regentis.

The lives and actions of princes have uſually a greater ſway upon the minds of the people than their laws.

All theſe obſervations are I think very natural, and very conſiderable. I ſhall not be able to ſpeak to them all; but ſhall proceed ſo far as the time and your patience will give me leave.

Firſt, it is here ſuppoſed that a nation muſt be of ſome religion or other. Joſhua does not put it to their choice whether they would worſhip any deity at all. That had been too wild and extravagant a ſuppoſition, and which it is likely in thoſe days had never entered into any man's mind. But he takes it for granted that all people will be of ſome religion; and then offers it to their conſideration which they would pitch upon, " Chooſe you this day whom " you will ſerve, whether the gods which your fa- " thers ſerved, *&c.*"

Religion is a thing to which men are not only formed by education and cuſtom, but, as Tully ſays, *Quo omnes duce naturâ vehimur*, it is that to which we are all carried by a natural inclination; which is the true reaſon why ſome religion or other hath ſo univerſally prevailed in all ages and places of the world.

The temporal felicity of men, and the ends of government can very hardly, if at all, be attained without

without religion. Take away this, and all obligations of conſcience ceaſe: and where there is no obligation of conſcience, all ſecurity of truth and juſtice and mutual confidence among men is at an end. For why ſhould I repoſe confidence in that man, why ſhould I take his word, or believe his promiſe, or put any of my intereſts and concernments into his power, who hath no other reſtraint upon him but that of humane laws, and is at liberty in his own mind and principles to do whatever he judgeth to be expedient for his intereſt, provided he can but do it without danger to himſelf? So that declared atheiſm and infidelity doth juſtly bring men under a jealouſy and ſuſpicion with all mankind; and every wiſe man hath reaſon to be upon his guard againſt thoſe, from whom he hath no cauſe to expect more juſtice and truth and equity in their dealings than he can compel them to by the mere dint and force of laws. For by declaring themſelves free from all other obligations they give us fair warning what we are to expect at their hands, and how far we may truſt them. Religion is the ſtrongeſt band of humane ſociety, and ſo neceſſary to the welfare and happineſs of mankind, as it could not have been more, if we could ſuppoſe the Being of GOD himſelf to have been purpoſely deſigned and contrived for the benefit and advantage of men: ſo that very well may it be taken for granted, that a nation muſt be of ſome religion or other.

Secondly, Though religion be a matter of our choice, yet it is neither a thing indifferent in itſelf, nor to a good governor, what religion his people are of. Notwithſtanding the ſuppoſition of the text,

SERM. XXVII.

Joſhua doth not leave them at liberty whether they will ſerve GOD or Idols; but by a very rhetorical ſcheme of ſpeech endeavours to engage them more firmly to the worſhip of the true GOD.

To countenance and ſupport the true religion, and to take care that the people be inſtructed in it, and that none be permitted to debauch and ſeduce men from it, properly belongs to the civil magiſtrate. This power the kings of Iſrael always exerciſed, not only with allowance, but with great approbation and commendation from GOD himſelf. And the caſe is not altered ſince chriſtianity: the better the religion is, the better it deſerves the countenance and ſupport of the civil authority. And this power of the civil magiſtrate in matters of religion was never called in queſtion, but by the enthuſiaſts of theſe latter times: and yet among theſe, every father and maſter of a family claims this power over his children and ſervants, at the ſame time that they deny it to the magiſtrate over his ſubjects. But I would fain know where the difference lies. Hath a maſter of a family more power over thoſe under his government than the magiſtrate hath? no man ever pretended it: nay, ſo far is it from that, that the natural authority of a father may be, and often is, limited and reſtrained by the laws of the civil magiſtrate. And why then may not a magiſtrate exerciſe the ſame power over his ſubjects in matters of religion, which every maſter challengeth to himſelf in his own family? that is, to eſtabliſh the true worſhip of GOD in ſuch manner and with ſuch circumſtances as he thinks beſt, and to permit none to affront it, or to ſeduce from it thoſe that are under his

his care. And to prevent all misunderstandings in this matter, I do not hereby ascribe any thing to the magistrate that can possibly give him any pretence of right to reject GOD's true religion, or to declare what he pleases to be so, and what books he pleases to be canonical and the word of GOD; and consequently to make a false religion so current by the stamp of his authority, as to oblige his subjects to the profession of it: because he who acknowledgeth himself to derive all his authority from GOD, can pretend to none against him. But if a false religion be established by law, the case here is the same as in all other laws that are sinful in the matter of them, but yet made by a lawful authority; in this case the subject is not bound to profess a false religion, but patiently to suffer for the constant profession of the true. SERM. XXVII.

And to speak freely in this matter, I cannot think (till I be better inform'd, which I am always ready to be) that any pretence of conscience warrants any man, that is not extraordinarily commission'd, as the apostles and first publishers of the gospel were, and cannot justify that commission by miracles as they did, to affront the establish'd religion of a nation (though it be false) and openly to draw men off from the profession of it in contempt of the magistrate and the law: All that persons of a different religion can in such a case reasonably pretend to, is to enjoy the private liberty and exercise of their own conscience and religion; for which they ought to be very thankful, and to forbear the open making of proselytes to their own religion, (though they be never so sure that they are in the right)

SERM. XXVII.

right) till they have either an extraordinary commiſſion from GOD to that purpoſe, or the providence of GOD make way for it by the permiſſion or connivance of the magiſtrate. Not but that every man hath a right to publiſh and propagate the true religion, and to declare it againſt a falſe one: but there is no obligation upon any man to attempt this to no purpoſe, and when without a miracle it can have no other effect but the loſs of his own life; unleſs he have an immediate command and commiſſion from GOD to this purpoſe, and be endued with a power of miracles, as a publick ſeal and teſtimony of that commiſſion, which was the caſe of the apoſtles, who after they had received an immediate commiſſion were not to enter upon the execution of it, but to "ſtay at Jeruſalem, till they were endued with power from on high." In this caſe a man is to abide all hazards, and may reaſonably expect both extraordinary aſſiſtance and ſucceſs, as the apoſtles had; and even a miraculous protection till his work be done; and after that, if he be call'd to ſuffer martyrdom, a ſupernatural ſupport under thoſe ſufferings.

And that they are guilty however of groſs hypocriſy who pretend a further obligation of conſcience in this matter, I ſhall give this plain demonſtration, which relies upon conceſſions generally made on all hands, and by all parties. No proteſtant (that I know of) holds himſelf obliged to go and preach up his religion and make converts in Spain or Italy: nor do either the proteſtant miniſters or popiſh prieſts think themſelves bound in conſcience to preach the goſpel in Turkey, to confute

confute the alchoran, and to convert the Mahometans. And what is the reaſon? becauſe of the ſeverity of the inquiſition in popiſh countries, and of the laws in Turkey. But doth the danger then alter the obligation of conſcience? No certainly; but it makes men throw off the falſe pretence and diſguiſe of it: but where there is a real obligation of conſcience, danger ſhould not deter men from their duty, as it did not the apoſtles: which ſhews their caſe to be different from ours, and that probably this matter was ſtated right at firſt. So that whatever is pretended, this is certain, that the prieſts and jeſuits of the church of Rome have in truth no more obligation of conſcience to make converts here in England than in Sweden or Turkey; where it ſeems the evident danger of the attempt hath for theſe many years given them a perfect diſcharge from their duty in this particular. I ſhall join the

SERM. XXVII.

Third and fourth obſervations together. "That "though the true religion may have ſeveral preju- "dices and objections againſt it, yet upon examina- "tion there will be found thoſe real advantages on "its ſide, that it may ſafely be referred to any "conſiderate man's choice: If it ſeem evil unto you "that ſerve the LORD, chooſe you this day whom "you will ſerve. If it ſeem evil unto you," intimating, that to ſome perſons, and upon ſome accounts, it may appear ſo. But when the matter is truly repreſented, the choice is not difficult, nor requires any long deliberation, "Chooſe you this day "whom you will ſerve." Let but the cauſe be fully and impartially heard, and a wiſe man may determine himſelf upon the ſpot, and give his verdict without ever going from the bar. The

SERM. XXVII.

The true religion hath always lain under ſome prejudices with partial and inconſiderate men; which commonly ſpring from one of theſe two cauſes, either the prepoſſeſſions of a contrary religion, or the contrariety of the true religion to the vicious inclinations and practices of men, which uſually lies at the bottom of all prejudice againſt religion. Religion is an enemy to mens beloved luſts, and therefore they are enemies to religion. I begin with the firſt, which is as much as I ſhall be able to compaſs at this time.

I. The prepoſſeſſions of a falſe religion; which commonly pretends two advantages on its ſide, antiquity and univerſality; and is wont to object to the true religion novelty and ſingularity. And both theſe are intimated both before and after the text: "Put away the gods which your fathers ſerved on "the other ſide of the flood, and in Egypt: and "chooſe you this day whom you will ſerve, whe-"ther the gods which your fathers ſerved on the "other ſide of the flood, or the gods of the Amo-"rites in whoſe land ye dwell." Idolatry was the religion of their fathers, and had ſpread it ſelf over the greateſt and moſt ancient nations of the world, and the moſt famous for learning and arts, the Chaldeans and Egyptians; and was the religion of the Amorites, and the nations round about them. So that Joſhua repreſents the heathen religion with all its ſtrength and advantage, and does not diſſemble its confident pretence to antiquity and univerſality, whereby they would alſo inſinuate the novelty and ſingularity of the worſhip of the God of Iſrael. And it is well worthy our obſervation, that one or both

both of these have always been the exceptions of false religions (especially of idolatry and superstition) against the true religion. The ancient idolaters of the world pretended their religion to be ancient and universal, that their fathers served these gods, and that the worship of the GOD of Israel was a plain innovation upon the ancient and catholick religion of the world, and that the very first rise and original of it was within the memory of their fathers: and no doubt they were almost perpetually upon the jews with that pert question, Where was your religion before Abraham? and telling them, that it was the religion of a very small part and corner of the world, confined within a little territory: but the great nations of the world, the Egyptians and Chaldeans, famous for all kind of knowledge and wisdom, and indeed all the nations round about them, worshipped other gods: and therefore it was an intolerable arrogance and singularity in them, to condemn their fathers and all the world, to be of a religion different from all other nations, and thereby to separate themselves and make a schism from the rest of mankind. SERM. XXVII.

And when the gospel appeared in the world, which the apostle to the Hebrews (to prevent the scandal of that word) calls the time of reformation, the jews and heathen still renewed the same objections against christianity. The jews urged against it, not the ancient scriptures and the true word of GOD, but that which they pretended to be of much greater authority, the unwritten word, the ancient and constant traditions of their church; and branded this new religion with the name of heresy,

5.

SERM. XXVII.

" after the way (ſaith St. Paul) that you call he-
" reſy, ſo worſhip I the GOD of my fathers; be-
" lieving all things that are written in the law,
" and in the prophets:" By which we ſee, that they of the church of Rome were not the firſt who called it hereſy to reject humane traditions, and to make the ſcriptures the rule of faith: this was done long before by their reverend predeceſſors, the ſcribes and phariſees.

And the gentiles, they pretended againſt it both antiquity and univerſality, the conſtant belief and practice of all ages, and almoſt all places of the world; *Sequimur majores noſtros qui feliciter ſecuti ſunt ſuos*, ſays Symmachus, " We follow our fore-
" fathers, who happily followed theirs;" but you bring a new religion, never known nor heard of in the world before.

And when the chriſtian religion was moſt miſerably depraved and corrupted, in that diſmal night of ignorance which overſpread theſe weſtern parts of the world about the ninth and tenth centuries; and many pernicious doctrines and ſuperſtitious practices were introduced, to the woful defacing of the chriſtian religion, and making it quite another thing from what our SAVIOUR had left it; and theſe corruptions and abuſes had continued for ſeveral ages; no ſooner was a reformation attempted but the church of Rome made the ſame out-cry of novelty and ſingularity: and though we have ſubſtantially anſwered it a thouſand times, yet we cannot obtain of them to forbear that thread-bare queſtion, " Where was your religion before Lu-
" ther?"

I ſhall therefore apply my ſelf to anſwer theſe two exceptions with all the brevity and clearneſs I can: and I doubt not to make it appear, that as to the point of univerſality (though that be no-wiſe neceſſary to juſtify the truth of any religion) ours is not inferior to theirs; if we take in the chriſtians of all ages, and of all parts of the world: and as to the point of antiquity, that our faith and the doctrines of our religion have clearly the advantage of theirs; all our faith being unqueſtionably ancient, theirs not ſo. SERM. XXVII.

1. As to the point of univerſality. Which they of the church of Rome, I know not for what reaſon, will needs make an inſeparable property and mark of the true church. And they never flout at the proteſtant religion with ſo good a grace among the ignorant people, as when they are bragging of their numbers, and deſpiſing poor proteſtancy becauſe embraced by ſo few. This peſtilent northern hereſy (as of late they ſcornfully call it) is entertained it ſeems only in this cold and cloudy corner of the world, by a company of dull ſtupid people, that can neither penetrate into the proofs nor the poſſibility of Tranſubſtantiation; whereas to the more refined ſouthern wits all theſe difficult and obſcure points are as clear as the ſun at noon-day.

But to ſpeak to the thing it ſelf. If number be neceſſary to prove the truth and goodneſs of any religion, ours upon enquiry will be found not ſo inconſiderable as our adverſaries would make it: thoſe of the reformed religion, according to the moſt exact calculations that have been made by learned men, being eſteemed not much unequal in number

SERM. XXVII.

to thoſe of the romiſh perſuaſion But then if we take in the ancient chriſtian church, whoſe faith was the ſame with ours; and other chriſtian churches at this day, which altogether are vaſtly greater and more numerous than the Roman church, and which agree with us, ſeveral of them in very conſiderable doctrines and practices in diſpute between us and the church of Rome, and all of them in diſclaiming that fundamental point of the Roman religion, and ſum of chriſtianity (as Bellarmine calls it) I mean the ſupremacy of the biſhop of Rome over all chriſtians and churches in the world, then the number on our ſide will be much greater than on theirs.

But we will not ſtand upon this advantage with them. Suppoſe we were by much the fewer. So hath the true church of GOD often been, without any the leaſt prejudice to the truth of their religion. What think we of the church in Abraham's time, which for ought we know was confined to one family; and one ſmall kingdom, that of Melcheſidec king of Salem? What think we of it in Moſes's time, when it was confined to one people wandring in the wilderneſs? What of it in Elijah's time, when beſides the two tribes that worſhipped at Jeruſalem, there were in the other ten but "ſeven thouſand that had not bowed their "knee to Baal?" What in our SAVIOUR's time, when the whole chriſtian church conſiſted of twelve apoſtles, and ſeventy diſciples, and ſome few followers beſide? How would Bellarmine have deſpiſed this little flock, becauſe it wanted one or two of his goodlieſt marks of the true church, univerſality and ſplendor? And what think we of the chriſtian church

church in the height of arianiſm and pelagianiſm, when a great part of chriſtendom was over-run with theſe errors, and the number of the orthodox was inconſiderable in compariſon of the hereticks? SERM. XXVII.

But what need I to urge theſe inſtances? As if the truth of a religion were to be eſtimated and carried by the major vote; which as it can be an argument to none but fools, ſo I dare ſay no honeſt and wiſe man ever made uſe of it for a ſolid proof of the truth and goodneſs of any church or religion. If multitude be an argument that men are in the right, in vain then hath the ſcripture ſaid, "thou ſhalt not follow a multitude to do evil." For if this argument be of any force, the greater number never go wrong.

2. As to the point of antiquity. This is not always a certain mark of the true religion. For ſurely there was a time when chriſtianity began and was a new profeſſion, and then both judaiſm and paganiſm had certainly the advantage of it in point of antiquity. But the proper queſtion in this caſe is, Which is the true ancient chriſtian faith, that of the church of Rome, or ours? And to make this matter plain, it is to be conſidered, that a great part of the Roman faith is the ſame with ours: as, namely, the articles of the apoſtles creed, as explained by the firſt four general councils. And theſe make up our whole faith, ſo far as concerns matters of mere and ſimple belief, that of abſolute neceſſity to ſalvation. And in this faith of ours, there is nothing wanting that can be ſhewn in any ancient creed of the chriſtian church. And thus far our faith, and theirs of the Roman church, are undoubtedly

SERM. XXVII.

edly of equal antiquity, that is, as ancient as chriſtianity it ſelf.

All the queſtion is, as to the matters in difference between us. The principal whereof are the twelve new articles of the creed of pope Pius IV. concerning the ſacrifice of the maſs, tranſubſtantiation, the communion in one kind only, purgatory, *&c.* not one of which is to be found in any ancient creed or confeſſion of faith generally allowed in the chriſtian church. The antiquity of theſe we deny, and affirm them to be innovations; and have particularly proved them to be ſo, not only to the anſwering, but almoſt to the ſilencing of our adverſaries.

And as for the negative articles of the proteſtant religion, in oppoſition to the errors and corruptions of the romiſh faith, theſe are by accident become a part of our faith and religion, occaſioned by their errors; as the renouncing of the doctrines of arianiſm became part of the catholick religion, after the riſe of that hereſy.

So that the caſe is plainly this; we believe and teach all that is contained in the creeds of the ancient chriſtian church, and was by them eſteemed neceſſary to ſalvation: and this is our religion. But now the church of Rome hath innovated in the chriſtian religion, and made ſeveral additions to it; and greatly corrupted it both in the doctrines and practices of it: and theſe additions and corruptions are their religion, as it is diſtinct from ours; and both becauſe they are corruptions and novelties, we have rejected them: and our rejection of theſe is our reformation: and our reformation we grant (if this will do them any good) not to be ſo ancient as their

corrup-

corruptions; all reformation neceſſarily ſuppoſing corruptions and errors to have been before it. SERM. XXVII.

And now we are at a little better leiſure to anſwer that captious queſtion of theirs, "Where was "your religion before Luther?" Where-ever chriſtianity was; in ſome places more pure, in others more corrupted: but eſpecially in theſe weſtern parts of chriſtendom over-grown for ſeveral ages with manifold errors and corruptions, which the reformation hath happily cut off, and caſt caway. So that though our reformation was as late as Luther, our religion is as ancient as chriſtianity it ſelf. For when the additions which the church of Rome hath made to the ancient chriſtian faith, and their innovations in practice are pared off, that which remains of their religion is ours; and this they cannot deny to be every tittle of it the ancient chriſtianity.

And what other anſwer than this could the jews have given to the like queſtion, if it had been put to them by the ancient idolaters of the world, "Where was your religion before Abraham?" but the very ſame in ſubſtance which we now give to the church of Rome? That for many ages the worſhip of the one true GOD had been corrupted, and the worſhip of idols had prevailed in a great part of the world; that Abraham was raiſed up by GOD to reform religion, and to reduce the worſhip of GOD to its firſt inſtitution; in the doing whereof he neceſſarily ſeparated himſelf and his family from the communion of thoſe idolaters. So that though the reformation which Abraham began was new, yet his religion was truly ancient; as old as that of Noah, and Enoch, and Adam. Which is the ſame

in

SERM. XXVII.

in ſubſtance that we ſay, and with the ſame and equal reaſon.

And if they will ſtill complain of the newneſs of our reformation, ſo do we too, and are heartily ſorry it began no ſooner; but however better late than never. Beſides it ought to be conſidered, that this objection of novelty lies againſt all reformation whatſoever, though ever ſo neceſſary, and though things be ever ſo much amiſs: and it is in effect to ſay, that if things be once bad, they muſt never be better, but muſt always remain as they are; for they cannot be better, without being reformed, and a reformation muſt begin ſome time, and whenever it begins it is certainly new. So that if a real reformation be made, the thing juſtifies itſelf; and no objection of novelty ought to take place againſt that which upon all accounts was ſo fit and neceſſary to be done. And if they of the church of Rome would but ſpeak their mind out in this matter, they are not ſo much diſpleaſed at the reformation which we have made becauſe it is new, as becauſe it is a reformation. It was the humour of Babylon of old (as the prophet tells us) "that ſhe would not be healed;" and this is ſtill the temper of the church of Rome, they "hate to be reformed;" and rather than acknowledge themſelves to have been once in an error, they will continue in it for ever. And this is that which at firſt made, and ſtill continues the breach and ſeparation between us; of which we are no-wiſe guilty who have only reformed what was amiſs, but they who obſtinately perſiſt in their errors, and will needs impoſe them upon us and will not let us be of their communion unleſs we will ſay they are no errors.

Jer. li. 9.

II. The

II. The other prejudice againſt the true religion is, the contrariety of it to the vicious inclinations and practices of men. SERM. XXVII.

It is too heavy a yoke, and lays too great a reſtraint upon humane nature. And this is that which in truth lies at the bottom of all objections againſt religion, "Men love darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their "deeds are evil."

But this argument will require a diſcourſe by itſelf, and therefore I ſhall not now enter upon it; only crave your patience a little longer, whilſt I make ſome reflexions upon what hath been already delivered.

You ſee what are the exceptions which idolatry and ſuperſtition have always made, and do at this day ſtill make, againſt the true religion; and how ſlight and inſignificant they are.

But do we then charge the church of Rome with idolatry? our church moſt certainly does ſo, and hath always done it from the beginning of the reformation; in her homilies, and liturgy, and canons, and in the writings of her beſt and ableſt champions. And though I have, as impartially as I could, conſider'd what hath been ſaid on both ſides in this controverſy; yet I muſt confeſs I could never yet ſee any tolerable defence made by them againſt this heavy charge. And they themſelves acknowledge themſelves to be greatly under the ſuſpicion of it, by ſaying (as cardinal Perron and others do) that the primitive chriſtians for ſome ages did neither worſhip images, nor pray to ſaints, for fear of being thought to approach too near the heathen idolatry: and, which is yet more, divers of their moſt learned men

5.

SERM. XXVII.

do confeſs, that if tranſubſtantiation be not true, they are as groſs idolaters as any in the world. And I hope they do not expect it from us, that in compliment to them, and to acquit them from the charge of idolatry, we ſhould preſently deny our ſenſes, and believe tranſubſtantiation; and if we do not believe this, they grant we have reaſon to charge them with idolatry.

But we own them to be a true church; which they cannot be, if they be guilty of idolatry. This they often urge us withal, and there ſeems at firſt ſight to be ſomething in it: and for that reaſon I ſhall endeavour to give ſo clear and ſatisfactory an anſwer to it, as that we may never more be troubled with it.

The truth is, we would fain hope, becauſe they ſtill retain the eſſentials of chriſtianity, and profeſs to believe all the articles of the chriſtian faith, that notwithſtanding their corruptions they may ſtill retain the true eſſence of a church: as a man may be truly and really a man, though he have the plague upon him; and for that reaſon be fit to be avoided by all that wiſh well to themſelves. But if this will not do, we cannot help it. Therefore to puſh the matter home; are they ſure that this is a firm and good conſequence, "that if they be idolaters, they "cannot be a true church?" Then let them look to it. It is they, I take it, that are concerned to prove themſelves a true church, and not we to prove it for them. And if they will not underſtand it of themſelves, it is fit they ſhould be told that there is a great difference between conceſſions of charity and of neceſſity, and that a very different uſe ought to be made

made of them. We are willing to think the beſt of them; but if they diſlike our charity in this point, nothing againſt the hair: if they will forgive us this injury, we will not offend them any more: but rather than have any farther difference with them about this matter, we will for quietneſs ſake compound it thus; that 'till they can clearly acquit themſelves from being idolaters, they ſhall never more againſt their wills be eſteemed a true church.

And now to draw to a concluſion.

" If it ſeem evil unto you to ſerve the LORD," and to worſhip him only; to pray to him alone, and that only in the name and mediation of JESUS CHRIST, as he hath given us commandment; " be- " cauſe there is but one GOD, and one MEDIATOR " between GOD and man, the man CHRIST JESUS. " If it ſeem evil unto you," to have the liberty to ſerve GOD in a language you can underſtand; and to have the free uſe of the holy ſcriptures, " which " are able to make men wiſe unto ſalvation;" and to have the ſacraments of our religion entirely adminiſtred to us, as our LORD did inſtitute and appoint.

And on the other hand, if it ſeem good to us, to put our necks once more under that yoke, which our fathers were not able to bear: if it be really a preferment to a prince to hold the pope's ſtirrup, and a privilege to be depoſed by him at his pleaſure, and a courteſy to be killed at his command: if to pray without underſtanding, and to obey without reaſon, and to believe againſt ſenſe; if ignorance, and implicit faith, and an inquiſition, be in good earneſt ſuch charming and deſirable things: then welcome

SERM. XXVII.

popery; which, wherever thou comeſt, doſt infallibly bring all theſe wonderful privileges and bleſſings along with thee.

But, the queſtion is not now about the choice but the change of our religion, after we have been ſo long ſettled in the quiet poſſeſſion and enjoyment of it. Men are very loth to change even a falſe religion. "Hath a nation changed their gods, which "yet are no Gods?" And ſurely there is much more reaſon why we ſhould be tenacious of the truth, and hold faſt that which is good.

We have the beſt religion in the world, the very ſame which the SON of GOD revealed, which the apoſtles planted and confirmed by miracles, and which the noble army of martyrs ſealed with their blood: and we have retrench'd from it all falſe doctrines and ſuperſtitious practices which have been added ſince. And I think we may without immodeſty ſay, that upon the plain ſquare of ſcripture and reaſon, of the tradition and practice of the firſt and beſt ages of the chriſtian church, we have fully juſtified our religion; and made it evident to the world, that our adverſaries are put to very hard ſhifts, and upon a perpetual diſadvantage in the defence of theirs.

I wiſh it were as eaſy for us to juſtify our lives as our religion. I do not mean in compariſon of our adverſaries (for that, as bad as we are, I hope we are yet able to do) but in compariſon of the rules of our holy religion, from which we are infinitely ſwerv'd; which I would to God we all did ſeriouſly conſider and lay to heart: I ſay, in compariſon of the rules of our holy religion, "which teach us to "deny

" deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and to live ſo-
" berly, and righteouſly, and godly in this preſent
" world, in expectation of the bleſſed hope, and
" the glorious appearance of the great GOD, and
" our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST;" to whom with the FATHER, and the HOLY GHOST, *&c.*

SERMON XXVIII.

Objections againſt the true Religion anſwered.

JOSHUA xxiv. 15.

If it ſeem evil unto you to ſerve the LORD, *chooſe you this day whom you will ſerve.*

SERM. XXVIII.

THESE words, as I have already declared in the former diſcourſe, are the laſt counſel and advice which Joſhua gave to the people of Iſrael, after he had ſafely conducted them into the land of Canaan. And that he might the more effectually perſuade them to continue ſtedfaſt in the worſhip of the true GOD, by an eloquent kind of inſinuation he doth as it were once more ſet them at liberty, and leave them to their own choice; " If it ſeem evil unto you to ſerve the " LORD, chooſe you this day whom you will ſerve "

The plain ſenſe of which words may be reſolved into this propoſition, that notwithſtanding all the prejudices

SERM. XXVIII.

prejudices and objections againſt the true religion, yet it hath thoſe real advantages on its ſide, that it may fafely be referred to any impartial and conſiderate man's choice; "if it ſeem evil unto you to "ſerve the LORD;" intimating that to ſome perſons, and upon ſome accounts, it may ſeem ſo; but when the matter is throughly examined, the reſolution and choice cannot be difficult, nor require any long deliberation, "chooſe you this day whom you "will ſerve."

The true religion hath alwàys lain under ſome prejudices with partial and inconſiderate men, ariſing chiefly from theſe two cauſes; the prepoſſeſſions of a falſe religion; and the contrariety of the true religion to the inclinations of men, and the uneaſineſs of it in point of practice.

Firſt, from the prepoſſeſſions of a falſe religion; which hath always been wont to lay claim to antiquity and univerſality, and to charge the true religion with novelty and ſingularity. And both theſe are intimated before the text; "put away the "gods whom your fathers ſerved, on the other ſide "of the flood and in Egypt, and chooſe you this "day whom you will ſerve." It was pretended that the worſhip of idols was the ancient religion of the world, of thoſe great nations the Egyptians and Chaldeans, and of all the nations round about them. But this hath already been conſidered at large.

Secondly, there are another ſort of prejudices againſt religion, more apt to ſtick with men of better ſenſe and reaſon; and theſe ariſe principally from the contrariety of the true religion to the inclinations of men, and the uneaſineſs of it in point of practice.

It

It is pretended that religion is a heavy yoke, and lays too great a reſtraint upon humane nature, and that the laws of it bear too hard upon the general inclinations of mankind. SERM. XXVIII.

I ſhall not at preſent meddle with the ſpeculative objections againſt religion, upon account of the pretended unreaſonableneſs of many things in point of belief: becauſe the contrariety of the true religion to the inclinations of men, and the uneaſineſs of it in point of practice, is that which in truth lies at the bottom of atheiſm and infidelity, and raiſes all that animoſity which is in the minds of bad men againſt religion, and exaſperates them to oppoſe it with all their wit and malice: "men love darkneſs "rather than light, becauſe their deeds are evil." And if this prejudice were but once removed, and men were in ſome meaſure reconciled to the practice of religion, the ſpeculative objections againſt it would almoſt vaniſh of themſelves: for there wants little elſe to enable a man to anſwer them, but a willingneſs of mind to have them anſwered, and that we have no intereſt and inclination to the contrary. And therefore I ſhall at preſent wholly apply my ſelf to remove this prejudice againſt religion, from the contrariety of it to the inclinations of men, and the uneaſineſs of it in point of practice.

And there are two parts of this objection.

1ſt. That a great part of the laws of religion do thwart the natural inclinations of men, which may reaſonably be ſuppoſed to be from GOD. And,

2ly. That all of them together are a heavy yoke, and do lay too great a reſtraint upon humane nature, intrenching too much upon the pleaſures and liberty of it.

I. That

SERM. XXVIII.

I. That a great part of the laws of religion do thwart the natural inclinations of men, which may reaſonably be ſuppoſed to be from GOD. So that GOD ſeems to have ſet our nature and our duty at variance, to have given us appetites and inclinations one way, and laws another: which if it were true, muſt needs render the practice of religion very grievous and uneaſy.

The force of this objection is very ſmartly expreſſed in thoſe celebrated verſes of a noble poet of our own, which are ſo frequently in the mouths of many who are thought to bear no good-will to religion.

O wearisome condition of humanity,
Born under one law, to another bound;
Vainly begot, and yet forbidden vanity;
Created sick, commanded to be sound.
If nature did not take delight in blood,
She would have made more easy ways to good.

So that this objection would fain charge the ſins of men upon GOD; firſt upon account of the evil inclinations of our nature; and then of the contrariety of our duty to thoſe inclinations. And from the beginning man hath always been apt to lay the blame of his faults where it can leaſt lie, upon goodneſs and perfection itſelf. The very firſt ſin that ever man was guilty of he endeavoured to throw upon GOD: "The woman whom thou gaveſt me, ſaith "Adam, ſhe gave me of the tree, and I did eat." And his poſterity are ſtill apt to excuſe themſelves the ſame way. But to return a particular anſwer to this objection.

1. We

SERM. XXVIII.

1. We will acknowledge ſo much of it as is true; that there is a great degeneracy and corruption of humane nature, from what it was originally framed when it came out of GOD's hands; of which the ſcripture gives us this account, that it was occaſioned by the voluntary tranſgreſſion of a plain and eaſy command given by GOD to our firſt parents. And this weakneſs contracted by the fall of our firſt parents naturally deſcends upon us their poſterity, and viſibly diſcovers itſelf in our inclinations to evil, and impotence to that which is good.

And of this the heathen philoſophers, from the light of nature, and their own experience and obſervation of themſelves and others, were very ſenſible; that humane nature was very much declined from its primitive rectitude, and ſunk into a weak and drooping and ſickly ſtate, which they called a πτερορρύησις, the moulting of the wings of the ſoul: but yet they were ſo juſt and reaſonable as not to charge this upon GOD, but upon ſome corruption and impurity contracted by the ſoul in a former ſtate, before its union with the body. For the deſcent of the ſoul into theſe groſs earthly bodies they looked upon as partly the puniſhment of faults committed in a former ſtate, and partly as the opportunity of a new trial in order to its purgation and recovery. And this was the beſt account they were able to give of this matter, without the light of divine revelation.

So that the degeneracy of humane nature is univerſally acknowledged, and GOD acquitted from being the cauſe of it: but however, the poſterity of Adam do all partake of the weakneſs contracted by

5.

SERM. XXVIII.

his fall, and do ſtill labour under the miſeries and inconveniencies of it. But then this degeneracy is not total. For though our faculties be much weakned and diſordered, yet they are not deſtroyed nor wholly perverted. Our natural judgment and conſcience doth ſtill dictate to us what is good, and what we ought to do; and the impreſſions of the natural law, as to the great lines of our duty, are ſtill legible upon our hearts. So that the law written in GOD's word is not contrary to the law written upon our hearts. And therefore it is not truly ſaid, "that "we are born under one law and bound to another." But the great diſorder is, that our inferior faculties, our ſenſitive appetite and paſſions, are broke looſe and have got head of our reaſon, and are upon all occaſions apt to rebel againſt it: but our judgment ſtill dictates the very ſame things which the law of GOD doth injoin.

It is likewiſe very viſible, that the ſad effects of this degeneracy do not appear equally and alike in all: whether from the better or worſe temper of our bodies, or from ſome other more ſecret cauſe, I ſhall not determine, becauſe I know not: but that there is a difference is evident. For though a proneneſs to evil, and ſome ſeeds of it be in all, yet we may plainly diſcover in many very early and forward inclinations to ſome kinds of virtue and goodneſs; which being cultivated by education, may under the ordinary influence of GOD's grace be carried on with great eaſe to perfection.

And there are others who are not ſo ſtrongly bent to that which is evil, but that by good inſtruction and example in their tender years they may be ſwayed

the

the other way, and without great difficulty formed to goodneſs. SERM. XXVIII.

There are ſome indeed (which is the hardeſt caſe) in whom there do very early appear ſtrong propenſions and inclinations to evil, eſpecially to ſome particular kinds of vice: but the caſe of theſe is not deſperate; though greater attention and care, and a much more prudent management is required in the education of ſuch perſons to correct their evil tempers, and by degrees to bend their inclinations the right way: and if the ſeeds of piety and virtue be but carefully ſown at firſt, very much may be done by this means, even in the moſt depraved natures, towards the altering and changing of them; however, to the checking and controlling of their vicious inclinations. And if theſe perſons when they come to riper years, would purſue theſe advantages of education, and take ſome pains with themſelves, and earneſtly ſeek the aſſiſtance of God's grace, I doubt not but even theſe perſons by degrees might at laſt get the maſtery of their unhappy tempers.

For next to the being and perfections of God, and the immortality of our own ſouls, there is no principle of religion that I do more firmly believe than this, that God hath that love for men, that if we do heartily beg his aſſiſtance, and be not wanting to ourſelves, he will afford it to every one of us in proportion to our need of it; that he is always beforehand with us, and prevents every man with the gracious offers of his help. And I doubt not but many very perverſe natures have thus been reclaimed. For God, who is the lover of ſouls (as the ſon of Sirach calls him) though he may put ſome men under more

SERM. XXVIII.

difficult circumstances of becoming better than others, yet he leaves no man under a fatal necessity of being wicked and perishing everlastingly. He tenderly considers every man's case and circumstances, and it is we that pull destruction upon ourselves, with the works of our own hands: but as sure as GOD is good and just, no man in the world is ruined for want of having sufficient help and aid afforded to him by GOD for his recovery.

2. It is likewise to be considered that GOD did not design to create man in the full possession of happiness at first, but to train him up to it by the trial of his obedience. But there could be no trial of our obedience without some difficulty in our duty; either by reason of powerful temptations from without, or of cross and perverse inclinations from within.

Our first parents, in their state of innocency, had only the trial of temptation without; to which they yielded and were overcome; having only natural power to have resisted the temptation, without any aid of supernatural grace: and that weakness to good, and proneness to evil, which they by wilful transgression contracted, is naturally derived to us; and we necessarily partake of the bitterness and impurity of the fountain from whence we spring. So that we now labour under a double difficulty; being assaulted by temptations from without, and incited by evil inclinations from within: but then, to balance these, we have a double advantage; that a greater reward is proposed to us, than for ought we know would have been conferred on our first parents had they continued innocent; and that we are endued with a supernatural power to conflict with these difficulties.

So

SERM. XXVIII.

So that, according to the merciful diſpenſation of GOD, all this conflict between our inclination and our duty does only ſerve to give a fairer opportunity for the fitting trial of our obedience, and for the more glorious reward of it.

3. GOD hath provided an univerſal remedy for this degeneracy and weakneſs of humane Nature: ſo that what we loſt by the firſt Adam, is abundantly repaired to us by the ſecond. This St. Paul tells us at large, Rom. v. "that as by one man ſin entered in- "to the world, and death by ſin; ſo the grace of "GOD hath abounded to all men by JESUS CHRIST:" and that to ſuch a degree, as effectual to countervail the ill effects of original ſin, and really to enable men, if they be not wanting to themſelves, to maſter and ſubdue all the bad inclinations of nature, even in thoſe who ſeem to be naturally moſt corrupt and depraved.

And if this be true, we may without any reflexion upon GOD acknowledge, that though he did not at firſt create man ſick and weak, yet he having made himſelf ſo, his poſterity are born ſo. But then GOD hath not left us helpleſs in this weak and miſerable ſtate, into which by wilful tranſgreſſion mankind is fallen: but as he commands us to be ſound, ſo he affords us ſufficient aids of his grace by JESUS CHRIST for our recovery.

And though "there is a law in our members war- "ring againſt the law of our minds, and captivating "us to the law of ſin and death;" i. e. though our ſenſitive appetites and paſſions are apt to rebel againſt the reaſon of our minds and the dictates of our natural conſcience, yet every chriſtian may ſay with St. Paul,

SERM. XXVIII.

St. Paul, "thanks be to GOD, who hath given us the "victory through our LORD JESUS CHRIST", i. e. hath not left us deſtitute of a ſufficient aid and ſtrength to enable us to conquer the rebellious motions of ſin, by the powerful aſſiſtance of that grace which is ſo plentifully offered to us in the goſpel. And this is the caſe of all thoſe who live under the goſpel: as for others, as their caſe is beſt known to GOD, ſo we have no reaſon to doubt but that his infinite goodneſs and mercy takes that care of them which becomes a merciful creator: though both the meaſures and the methods of his mercy towards them, are ſecret and unknown to us.

4. The hardeſt conteſt between man's inclination and duty, is in thoſe who have wilfully contracted vicious habits, and by that means, rendred their duty much more difficult to themſelves; having greatly improved the evil inclinations of nature by wicked practice and cuſtom. For the ſcripture plainly ſuppoſeth, that men may debauch even corrupt nature, and make themſelves ten-fold more the children of wrath and of the devil, than they were by nature.

This is a caſe ſadly to be deplored, but yet not utterly to be deſpaired of. And therefore thoſe who by a long progreſs in an evil courſe, are plunged into this ſad condition, ought to conſider that they are not to be reſcued out of it by an ordinary reſolution, and a common grace of GOD. Their caſe plainly requires an extraordinary remedy. For he that is deeply engaged in vice is like a man laid faſt in a bog, who by a faint and lazy ſtruggling to get out, does but ſpend his ſtrength to no purpoſe, and ſinks himſelf the deeper into it: the only way is,

by

by a resolute and vigorous effort to spring out, if possible, at once. And therefore in this case, to a vigorous resolution there must be joined an earnest application to GOD for his powerful grace and assistance, to help us out of this miserable state. And if we be truly sensible of the desperate danger of our condition, this pressing necessity of our case will be apt to inspire us with a mighty resolution. For power and necessity are neighbours, and never dwell far asunder. When men are severely urged and pressed, they find a power in themselves which they thought they had not. Like a coward driven up to a wall, who in the extremity of distress and despair will fight terribly and perform wonders: or like a man lame of the gout, who being assaulted by a present and terrible danger forgets his disease, and will find his legs rather than lose his life. SERM. XXVIII.

And in this, I do not speak above the rate of humane nature, and what men throughly roused and awakened to a sense of their danger, by a mighty resolution may morally do, through that divine grace and assistance which is ever ready to be afforded to well-resolved minds, and such as are sincerely bent to return to GOD and their duty. More than this I cannot say for the encouragement of those who have proceeded far in an evil course: and they who have made their case so very desperate, ought to be very thankful to GOD that there is any remedy left for them.

5. From all that hath been said, it evidently appears, how malicious a suggestion it is, that GOD seeks the destruction of men, and hath made his laws on purpose so difficult and cross to our inclinations,

SERM. XXVIII.

nations, that he might have an advantage to ruin us for our diſobedience to them. Alas, we are ſo abſolutely under the power of GOD, and ſo unable to withſtand it, that he may deſtroy us when he pleaſeth, without ſeeking pretences for it: "for who "hath reſiſted his will?" if goodneſs were not his nature, he hath power enough to bear out whatever he hath a mind to do to us. But our deſtruction is plainly of our ſelves, and GOD is free from the blood of all men. And he hath not made the way to eternal life ſo difficult to any of us, with a deſign to make us miſerable, but that we by a vigorous reſolution, and an unwearied diligence, and a patient continuance in well doing, might win and wear a more glorious crown, and be fit to receive a more ample reward from his bounty and goodneſs: yea, in ſome ſenſe, I may ſay, from his juſtice; "for "GOD is not unrighteous, to forget our work and "labour of love." He will fully conſider all the pains that any of us take in his ſervice, and all the difficulties that we ſtruggle with out of love to GOD and goodneſs. So that this objection, from the claſhing of our duty with our inclination, is I hope fully anſwered: Since GOD hath provided ſo powerful and effectual a remedy againſt our natural impotency and infirmity, by the grace of the goſpel.

And though to thoſe who have wilfully contracted vicious habits, a religious and virtuous courſe of life be very difficult, yet the main difficulty lies in our firſt entrance upon it; and when that is over, the ways of goodneſs are as eaſy as it is fit any thing ſhould be that is ſo excellent, and that hath the encouragement of ſo glorious a reward. Cuſtom will reconcile

reconcile men almoſt to any thing; but there are thoſe charms in the ways of wiſdom and virtue, that a little acquaintance and converſation with them will ſoon make them more delightful than any other courſe. And who will grudge any pains and trouble to bring himſelf into ſo ſafe and happy a condition? After we have tried both courſes, of religion and profaneneſs, of virtue and vice, we ſhall certainly find, that nothing is ſo wiſe, ſo eaſy, and ſo comfortable as to be virtuous and good, and always to do that which we are inwardly convinced we ought to do. Nor would I deſire more of any man in this matter, than to follow the ſobereſt convictions of his own mind, and to do that which upon the moſt ſerious conſideration at all times, in proſperity and affliction, in ſickneſs and health, in the time of life and at the hour of death, he judgeth wiſeſt and ſafeſt for him to do. I proceed to the

II. Branch of the objection, "That the laws of "religion (and particularly of the chriſtian religion) "are a heavy yoke, laying too great a reſtraint up- "on humane nature, and entrenching too much "upon the pleaſures and liberty of it."

There was, I confeſs, ſome pretence for this objection againſt the jewiſh religion; which by the multitude of its poſitive inſtitutions and external obſervances, muſt needs have been very burdenſome. And the ſame objection lies againſt the church of Rome, who (as they have handled chriſtianity) by the unreaſonable number of their needleſs and ſenſeleſs ceremonies, have made the yoke of CHRIST heavier than that of Moſes, and the goſpel a more carnal com-

SERM. XXVIII.

mandment than the law. So that chriſtianity is loſt among them in the trappings and accoutrements of it; with which inſtead of adorning religion they have ſtrangely diſguiſed it, and quite ſtifled it in the crowd of external rites and ceremonies.

But the pure chriſtian religion, as it was delivered by our SAVIOUR, hath hardly any thing in it that is poſitive; except the two ſacraments, which are not very troubleſome neither, but very much for our comfort and advantage, becauſe they convey and confirm to us the great bleſſings and privileges of our religion. In other things chriſtianity hath hardly impoſed any other laws upon us but what are enacted in our natures, or are agreeable to the prime and fundamental laws of it; nothing but what every man's reaſon either dictates to him to be neceſſary, or approves as highly fit and reaſonable.

But we do moſt groſly miſtake the nature of pleaſure and liberty, if we promiſe them to ourſelves in any evil wicked courſe. For, upon due ſearch and trial it will be found, that true pleaſure, and perfect freedom are no-where to be found but in the practice of virtue, and in the ſervice of GOD. The laws of religion do not abridge us of any pleaſure that a wiſe man can deſire, and ſafely enjoy, I mean without a greater evil and trouble conſequent upon it. The pleaſure of commanding our appetites, and governing our paſſions, by the rules of reaſon, (which are the laws of GOD) is infinitely to be preferred before any ſenſual pleaſure whatſoever: becauſe it is the pleaſure of wiſdom and diſcretion; and gives us the ſatisfaction of having done that which is the beſt and fitteſt for reaſonable creatures to do. Who would not rather

rather chooſe to govern himſelf as Scipio did, amidſt all the temptations and opportunities of ſenſual pleaſure which his power and victories preſented to him, than to wallow in all the delights of ſenſe?

Nothing is more certain in reaſon and experience, than that every inordinate appetite and affection is a puniſhment to itſelf; and is perpetually croſſing its own pleaſure, and defeating its own ſatisfaction, by over-ſhooting the mark it aims at. For inſtance, intemperance in eating and drinking, inſtead of delighting and ſatisfying nature, doth but load and cloy it; and inſtead of quenching a natural thirſt, which it is extremely pleaſant to do, creates an unnatural one, which is troubleſome and endleſs. The pleaſure of revenge, as ſoon as it is executed, turns into grief and pity, guilt and remorſe, and a thouſand melancholy wiſhes that we had reſtrained ourſelves from ſo unreaſonable an act. And the ſame is as evident in other ſenſual exceſſes, not ſo fit to be deſcribed. We may truſt Epicurus for this, that there can be no true pleaſure without temperance in the uſe of pleaſure. And GOD and reaſon have ſet us no other bounds concerning the uſe of ſenſual pleaſures, but that we take care not to be injurious to ourſelves, or others, in the kind or degree of them. And it is very viſible, that all ſenſual exceſs is naturally attended with a double inconvenience: as it goes beyond the limits of nature, it begets bodily pains and diſeaſes: as it tranſgreſſeth the rules of reaſon and religion, it breeds guilt and remorſe in the mind. And theſe are, beyond compariſon, the two greateſt evils in this world; a diſeaſed body, and a diſcon-

SERM. XXVIII.

tented mind. And in this I am ſure I ſpeak to the inward feeling and experience of men; and ſay nothing but what every vicious man finds, and hath a more lively ſenſe of, than is to be expreſſed by words.

When all is done, there is no pleaſure comparable to that of innocency, and freedom from the ſtings of a guilty conſcience; this is a pure and ſpiritual pleaſure, much above any ſenſual delight. And yet among all the delights of ſenſe, that of health (which is the natural conſequent of a ſober, and chaſte, and regular life) is a ſenſual pleaſure far beyond that of any vice: for it is the life of life; and that which gives a grateful reliſh to all our other enjoyments. It is not indeed ſo violent and tranſporting a pleaſure, but it is pure, and even, and laſting, and hath no guilt and regret, no ſorrow and trouble in it, or after it: which is a worm that infallibly breeds in all vicious and unlawful pleaſures, and makes them to be bitterneſs in the end.

All the ways of ſin are ſo beſet with thorns and difficulties on every ſide, there are ſo many unanſwerable objections againſt vice, from the unreaſonableneſs and uglineſs of it, from the remorſe that attends it, from the endleſs miſery that follows it, that none but the raſh and inconſiderate can obtain leave of themſelves to commit it. It is the daughter of inadvertency, and blindneſs and folly; and the mother of guilt, and repentance and woe. There is no pleaſure that will hold out and abide with us to the laſt, but that of innocency and well-doing. All ſin is folly; and as Seneca truly ſays, *Omnis ſtultitia laborat faſtidio ſui*; "All folly ſoon grows ſick "and weary of itſelf." The pleaſure of it is ſlight and

and ſuperficial, but the trouble and remorſe of it pierceth our very hearts. SERM. XXVIII.

And then as to the other part of the objection, "that religion reſtrains us of our liberty:" the contrary is evidently true, that ſin and vice are the greateſt ſlavery. For he is truly a ſlave, who is not at liberty to follow his own judgment, and to do thoſe things which he is inwardly convinced it is beſt for him to do; but is ſubject to the unreaſonable commands, and the tyrannical power and violence of his luſts and paſſions: ſo that he is not maſter of himſelf, but other lords have got dominion over him; and he is perfectly at their beck and command. One vice or paſſion bids him go, and he goes; another, come, and he comes; and a third, do this, and he doth it. The man is at perpetual variance with his own mind, and continually committing the things which he condemns in himſelf. And it is all one, whether a man be ſubject to the will and humour of another perſon, or to his own luſts and paſſions. Only this of the two is the worſe; becauſe the tyrant is at home, and always ready at hand to domineer over him; he is got within him, and ſo much the harder to be vanquiſhed and overcome.

But the ſervice of God, and obedience to his laws is perfect liberty: Becauſe the law of God requires nothing of us, but what is recommended to us by our own reaſon, and from the benefit and advantage of doing it; nothing but what is much more for our own intereſt to do it, than it can be for God's to command it. And tho' in ſome things God exacts obedience of us more indiſpenſibly, and under ſeverer penalties, it is becauſe thoſe things are in their nature

SERM. XXVIII.

nature more neceſſary to our felicity. And how could GOD poſſibly have dealt more graciouſly and kindly with us, than to oblige us moſt ſtrictly to that which is moſt evidently for our good; and to make ſuch laws for us, as if we live in obedience to them will infallibly make us happy? ſo that taking all things into conſideration, the intereſt of our bodies and our ſouls, of the preſent and the future, of this world and the other, religion is the moſt reaſonable and wiſe, the moſt comfortable and compendious courſe that any man can take in order to his own happineſs.

The conſideration whereof ought to be a mighty endearment of our duty to us, and a moſt prevalent argument with us to yield a ready and chearful obedience to the laws of GOD; which are in truth ſo many acts of grace and favour to mankind, the real privileges of our nature, and the proper means and cauſes of our happineſs: and do reſtrain us from nothing but from doing miſchief to our ſelves, from playing the fools and making our ſelves miſerable.

And therefore inſtead of oppoſing religion, upon pretence of the unreaſonable reſtraints of it, we ought to thank GOD heartily, that he hath laid ſo ſtrict an obligation upon us to regard and purſue our true intereſt; and hath been pleaſed to take that care of us, as to ſet bounds to our looſe and wild appetites by our duty; and in giving us rules to live by, hath no ways complied with our inconſiderate and fooliſh inclinations, to our real harm and prejudice: but hath made thoſe things neceſſary for us to do, which in all reſpects are beſt for us; and which, if we were perfectly left to our own liberty, ought

ought in all reaſon to be our free and firſt choice: and hath made the folly and inconvenience of ſin ſo groſly palpable, that every man may ſee it beforehand that will but conſider, and at the beginning of a bad courſe look to the end of it; and they that will not conſider, ſhall be forced from woful experience at laſt to acknowledge it, when they find the diſmal effects and miſchievous conſequences of their vices ſtill meeting them at one turn or other. SERM. XXVIII.

And now, by all that hath been ſaid upon this argument, I hope we are ſatisfied that Religion is no ſuch intolerable yoke; and that upon a due and full conſideration of things it cannot ſeem evil unto any of us to ſerve the LORD: nay, on the contrary, that it is abſolutely neceſſary, both to our preſent peace and our future felicity: and that a religious and virtuous life is not only upon all accounts the moſt prudent, but after we are entred upon it, and accuſtomed to it, the moſt pleaſant courſe that any man can take; and however inconſiderate men may complain of the reſtraints of religion that it is not one jot more our duty, than it is our privilege and our happineſs.

And I cannot think, that upon ſober conſideration any man could ſee reaſon to thank GOD to be releaſed from any of his laws, or to have had the contrary to them enjoined. Let us ſuppoſe, that the laws of GOD had been juſt the reverſe of what they now are; that he had commanded us, under ſevere penalties, to deal falſly and fraudulently with our neighbours; to demean our ſelves ungratefully to our beſt friends and benefactors; to be drunk every day, and to purſue ſenſual pleaſures to the endangering

SERM. XXVIII.

ing of our health and life: how ſhould we have complained of the unreaſonableneſs of theſe laws, and have murmured at the ſlavery of ſuch intolerable impoſitions? and yet now that GOD hath commanded us the contrary, things every way agreeable to our reaſon and intereſt, we are not pleaſed neither. What will content us? as our SAVIOUR expoſtulates in a like caſe, "whereunto ſhall I liken "this generation? it is like unto children playing "in the market-place, and calling unto their com- "panions, we have piped unto you, and ye have "not danced; we have mourned, and ye have not "lamented." This is perfectly childiſh, to be pleaſed with nothing; neither to like this nor the contrary. We are not contented with the laws of GOD as they are, and yet the contrary to them we ſhould have eſteemed the greateſt grievance in the world.

And if this be true, that the laws of GOD, how contrary ſoever to our vicious inclinations, and really calculated for our benefit and advantage, it would almoſt be an affront to wiſe and conſiderate men to importune them to their intereſt; and with great earneſtneſs to perſuade them to that which in all reſpects is ſo viſibly for their advantage, "chooſe "you therefore this day whom you will ſerve;" GOD, or your luſts. And take up a ſpeedy reſolution in a matter of ſo great and preſſing a concernment; chooſe you this day.

Where there is great hazard in the doing of a thing, it is good to deliberate long before we undertake it: but where the thing is not only ſafe but beneficial, and not only hugely beneficial but highly neceſſary;

ceſſary; when our life and our happineſs depends upon it, and all the danger lies in the delay of it; there we cannot be too ſudden in our reſolution, nor too ſpeedy in the execution of it. That which is evidently ſafe, needs no deliberation; and that which is abſolutely neceſſary, will admit of none. SERM. XXVIII.

Therefore reſolve upon it out of hand; "to day, "whilſt it is called to day, leſt any of you be "hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin." In the days of your youth and health; "for that is the "acceptable time, that is the day of ſalvation:" before the evil day comes, and you be driven to it by the terrible apprehenſion and approach of death, when men fly to GOD only for fear of his wrath. For the greateſt atheiſts and infidels (when they come to die, if they have any of that reaſon left, which they have uſed ſo ill) have commonly right opinions about GOD and religion. For then the confidence as well as the comfort of atheiſm leaves them, as the devil uſes to do witches when they are in diſtreſs. Then with Nebuchadnezzar, when they are recovered from being beaſts, they look up to heaven, and their underſtanding returns to them: then they believe a GOD, and cannot help it; they believe, and tremble at the thoughts of him. Thus Lucretius, one of their great authors, obſerves, that when men are in diſtreſs,

Acriùs advertunt animos ad religionem;

the thoughts of religion are then more quick and pungent upon their minds.

Nam veræ voces tum demum pectore ab imo
Eliciuntur; *& eripitur perſona, manet res.*

SERM. XXVIII.

Mens words then come from the bottom of their hearts; the mask is taken off, and things then appear as in truth they are.

But then perhaps it may be too late to make this choice: nay then it can hardly be choice, but neceſſity. Men do not then chooſe to ſerve the LORD, but they are urged and forced to it by their fears. They have ſerved their luſts all their life long, and now they would fain ſerve themſelves of GOD at the hour of death. They have done what they can, by their inſolent contempt and defiance of the almighty, to make themſelves miſerable; and now that they can ſtand out no longer againſt him, they are contented at laſt to be beholden to him to make them happy. The mercies of GOD are vaſt and boundleſs, but yet methinks it is too great a preſumption in all reaſon, for men to deſign before-hand to make the mercy of GOD the ſanctuary and retreat of a ſinful life.

To draw then to a concluſion of this diſcourſe. If ſafety, or pleaſure, or liberty, or wiſdom, or virtue, or even happineſs it ſelf have any temptation in them, religion hath all theſe baits and allurements. What Tully ſays of philoſophy, is much more true of the chriſtian religion, the wiſdom and philoſophy which is from above; *nunquam ſatis laudari poterit, cui qui pareat, omne tempus ætatis ſine moleſtia degere poſſit.* "We can never praiſe it "enough, ſince whoever lives according to the "rules of it, may paſs the whole age of his life "(I may add, his whole duration, this life and the "other) without trouble."

Philo-

SERM. XXVIII.

Philosophy hath given us several plausible rules for the attaining of peace and tranquillity of mind, but they fall very much short of bringing men to it. The very best of them fail us upon the greatest occasions. But the christian religion hath effectually done all that which philosophy pretended to, and aimed at. The precepts and promises of the holy scriptures are every way sufficient for our comfort, and for our instruction in righteousness: to correct all the errors, and to bear us up under all the evils and adversities of humane life; especially that holy and heavenly doctrine which is contained in the admirable sermons of our SAVIOUR, *quem cum legimus, quem philosophum non contemnimus?* whose excellent discourses when we read, what philosopher do we not despise? none of the philosophers could, upon sure grounds, give that encouragement to their scholars which our SAVIOUR does to his disciples; "take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and "ye shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is "easy, and my burden is light."

This is the advantage of the christian religion sincerely believed and practised, that it gives perfect rest and tranquillity to the mind of man: it frees us from the guilt of an evil conscience, and from the power of our lusts, and from the slavish fear of death and of the vengeance of another world. It builds our comfort upon a rock, which will abide all storms, and remain unshaken in every condition, and will last and hold out of ever: "he that hear-"eth these sayings of mine, and doth them (saith "our LORD) I will liken him to a wise man, who "built his house upon a rock."

SERM. XXVIII.

In ſhort, religion makes the life of man a wiſe deſign, regular and conſtant to itſelf; becauſe it unites all our reſolutions and actions in one great end: whereas without religion the life of man is a wild, and fluttering, and inconſiſtent thing, without any certain ſcope and deſign. The vicious man lives at random, and acts by chance: for he that walks by no rule can carry on no ſettled and ſteady deſign. It would pity a man's heart to ſee, how hard ſuch men are put to it for diverſion, and what a burden time is to them; and how ſolicitous they are to deviſe ways, not to ſpend it but to ſquander it away. For their great grievance is conſideration, and to be obliged to be intent upon any thing that is ſerious. They hurry from one vanity and folly to another; and plunge themſelves into drink, not to quench their thirſt, but their guilt; and are beholden to every vain man, and to every trifling occaſion, that can but help to take time off their hands. Wretched and inconſiderate men! who have ſo vaſt a work before them, the happineſs of all eternity to take care of and provide for, and yet are at a loſs how to employ their time: ſo that irreligion and vice makes life an extravagant and unnatural thing, becauſe it perverts and overthrows the natural courſe and order of things. For inſtance; according to nature men labour to get an eſtate, to free themſelves from temptations to rapine and injury; and that they may have wherewithal to ſupply their own wants, and to relieve the needs of others. But now the covetous man heaps up riches, not to enjoy them, but to have them; and ſtarves himſelf in the midſt of plenty, and moſt unnaturally cheats and robs

robs himſelf of that which is his own; and makes a hard ſhift to be as poor and miſerable with a great eſtate, as any man can be without it. According to the deſign of nature, men ſhould eat and drink that they may live; but the voluptuous man only lives that he may eat and drink. Nature in all ſenſual enjoyments deſigns pleaſure, which may certainly be had within the limits of virtue: but vice raſhly purſues pleaſure into the enemies quarters; and never ſtops 'till the ſinner be ſurrounded and ſeized upon by pain and torment. SERM. XXVIII.

So that take away GOD and Religion, and men live to no purpoſe; without propoſing any worthy and conſiderable end of life to themſelves. Whereas the fear of GOD, and the care of our immortal ſouls, fixeth us upon one great deſign, to which our whole life, and all the actions of it are ultimately referr'd, *Ubi unus Deus colitur* (ſaith Lactantius) *ibi vita, & omnis actus, ad unum caput, & ad unam ſummam refertur*; when we acknowledge GOD as the author of our being, as our ſovereign, and our judge, our end and our happineſs is then fixed; and we can have but one reaſonable deſign, and that is, by endeavouring to pleaſe GOD to gain his favour and protection in this world, and to arrive at the bliſsful enjoyment of him in the other: "In whoſe preſence "is fulneſs of joy; and at whoſe right hand are "pleaſures for evermore." To him, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, be all honour and glory, dominion and power, now and for ever. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON XXIX.

Of the difficulty of reforming vicious habits.

JEREM. xiii. 23.

Can the ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his ſpots? then may ye alſo do good that are accuſtomed to do evil.

SERM. XXIX.

CONſidering the great difficulty of reclaiming thoſe who are far gone in an evil courſe, it is no more than needs to uſe all ſorts of arguments to this purpoſe: from the conſideration of the evil of ſin, and of the goodneſs of GOD and his wonderful patience and long-ſuffering towards us in the midſt of our infinite provocations: from his great mercy and pity declared to us in all thoſe gracious means and methods which he uſeth for our recovery: and from his readineſs and forwardneſs after all our rebellions to receive us upon our repentance, and to be perfectly reconciled to us as if we had never offended him: and from the final iſſue and event of a wicked life, the diſmal and endleſs miſeries of another world, into which we ſhall inevitably fall except we repent in time and return to a better mind: and laſtly, from the danger of being hardened in an evil courſe, paſt all remedy and hopes of repentance.

And yet I am very ſenſible that to diſcourſe to men of the impoſſibility, or at leaſt the extreme difficulty

ficulty of reſcuing themſelves out of this miſerable ſtate, ſeems to be an odd and croſs kind of argument, and more apt to drive people to deſpair than to gain them to repentance. SERM. XXIX.

But ſince the SPIRIT of GOD is pleaſed to make uſe of it to this purpoſe, we may ſafely rely upon infinite wiſdom for the fitneſs of it to awaken ſinners to a ſenſe of their condition, in order to their recovery. For here in the text, after terrible threatnings of captivity and deſolation to the people of the jews, who were extremely wicked and degenerate, through an univerſal depravation of manners in all ranks of men from the higheſt to the loweſt, ſo that they ſeemed to ſtand upon the brink of ruin, and to be fatally devoted to it; to add to the terror and force of theſe threatnings, GOD by his prophet repreſents to them the infinite danger and extreme difficulty of their caſe, to ſee if he could ſtartle them by telling them into what a deſperate condition they had plunged themſelves; being by a long cuſtom of ſinning ſo far engaged in an evil courſe, that they had almoſt cut off themſelves from a poſſibility of retreat; ſo that the difficulty of their change ſeemed next to a natural impoſſibility. "Can the ethio-"pian change his skin, or the leopard his ſpots? "then may ye alſo do good that are accuſtom'd to "do evil."

The expreſſion is very high, and it is to be hoped ſomewhat hyperbolical, and above the juſt meaning of the words. Which are, I think, only deſigned to ſignify to us the extreme difficulty of making this change; which is therefore reſembled to a natural impoſſibility, as coming very near it, though not altogether up to it.

And

SERM. XXIX.

And that this expreſſion is thus to be mitigated, will appear more than probable, by conſidering ſome other like paſſages of ſcripture. As, where our SAVIOUR compares the difficulty of a rich man's ſalvation to that which is naturally impoſſible, viz. to "a camel's paſſing through the eye of a needle:" nay, he pitcheth his expreſſion higher, and doth not only make it a thing of equal but of greater difficulty; "I ſay unto you, it is eaſier for a camel to go "through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man "to enter into the kingdom of GOD." And yet when he comes to explain this to his diſciples, he tells them that he only meant that the thing was very difficult, "how hard is it for thoſe that have "riches to be ſaved?" and that it was not abſolutely impoſſible, but ſpeaking according to humane probability: "with men this is impoſſible, but not with "GOD."

And thus alſo it is reaſonable to underſtand that ſevere paſſage of the apoſtle, Heb. vi. 4. "It is im-"poſſible for them that were once enlightened, if "they fall away, to renew them again to repen-"tance." It is impoſſible, that is, it is very difficult.

In like manner we are to underſtand this high expreſſion in the text, "Can the ethiopian change "his skin or the leopard his ſpots? then may ye "alſo do good that are accuſtomed to do evil;" that is, this moral change of men, ſettled and fixed in bad habits, is almoſt as difficult as the other.

From the words thus explained two things will properly fall under our conſideration.

First,

SERM. XXIX.

Firſt, the great difficulty of reforming vicious habits, or of changing a bad courſe, to thoſe who have been deeply engaged in it, and long accuſtomed to it.

Secondly, notwithſtanding the great difficulty of the thing, what ground of hope and encouragement there is left that it may be done. So that notwithſtanding the appearing harſhneſs of the text, the reſult of my diſcourſe will be, not to diſcourage any, how bad ſoever, from attempting this change, but to put them upon it, and to perſuade them to it; and to remove out of the way that which may ſeem to be one of the ſtrongeſt objections againſt all endeavours of men very bad, to become better.

I. Firſt, the great difficulty of reforming vicious habits, or of changing a bad courſe, to thoſe who have been deeply engaged in it, and long accuſtomed to it. And this difficulty ariſeth, partly from the general nature of habits indifferently conſidered whether they be good, or bad, or indifferent; partly, from the particular nature of evil and vicious habits; and partly, from the natural and judicial conſequences of a great progreſs and long continuance in an evil courſe. By the conſideration of theſe three particulars, the extreme difficulty of this change, together with the true cauſes and reaſons of it, will fully appear.

1. If we conſider the nature of all habits, whether good, or bad, or indifferent. The cuſtom and frequent practice of any thing begets in us a faculty and eaſineſs in doing it. It bends the powers of our ſoul, and turns the ſtream and current of our animal ſpirits ſuch a way, and gives all our faculties a tendency and

SERM. XXIX.

pliableneſs to ſuch a ſort of actions. And when we have long ſtood bent one way, we grow ſettled and confirmed in it; and cannot without great force and violence be reſtored to our former ſtate and condition. For the perfection of any habit, whether good or bad, induceth a kind of neceſſity of acting accordingly. A rooted habit becomes a governing principle, and bears almoſt an equal ſway in us with that which is natural. It is a kind of a new nature ſuperinduced, and even as hard to be expelled, as ſome things which are primitively and originally natural. When we bend a thing at firſt, it will endeavour to reſtore itſelf; but it may be held bent ſo long 'till it will continue ſo of itſelf, and grow crooked; and then it may require more force and violence to reduce it to its former ſtraightneſs, than we uſed to make it crooked at firſt. This is the nature of all habits; the farther we proceed, the more we are confirmed in them: and that which at firſt we did voluntarily, by degrees becomes ſo natural and neceſſary, that it is almoſt impoſſible for us to do otherwiſe. This is plainly ſeen in the experience of every day, in things good and bad, both in leſſer and greater matters.

2. This difficulty ariſeth more eſpecially from the particular nature of evil and vicious habits. Theſe, becauſe they are ſuitable to our corrupt nature, and conſpire with the inclinations of it, are likely to be of a much quicker growth and improvement, and in a ſhorter ſpace, and with leſs care and endeavour, to arrive at maturity and ſtrength, than the habits of grace and goodneſs. Conſidering the propenſion of our depraved nature, the progreſs of virtue and goodneſs

goodneſs is up the hill, in which we not only move hardly and heavily, but are eaſily roll'd back: but by wickedneſs and vice we move downwards; which, as it is much quicker and eaſier, ſo it is harder for us to ſtop in that courſe, and infinitely more difficult to return from it. SERM. XXIX.

Not but that at firſt a ſinner hath ſome conſiderable checks and reſtraints upon him, and meets with ſeveral rubs and difficulties in his way; the ſhame and unreaſonableneſs of his vices, and the trouble and diſquiet which they create to him: but he breaks looſe from theſe reſtraints, and gets over theſe difficulties by degrees: and the faſter and farther he advanceth in an evil courſe, the leſs trouble ſtill they give him, 'till at laſt they almoſt quite loſe their force, and give him little or no diſturbance.

Shame is a great reſtraint upon ſinners at firſt, but that ſoon falls off: and when men have once loſt their innocence, their modeſty is not like to be long troubleſome to them. For impudence comes on with vice, and grows up with it. Leſſer vices do not baniſh all ſhame and modeſty, but great and abominable crimes harden mens foreheads, and make them ſhameleſs. "Were they aſhamed (ſaith the prophet) "when they committed abomination? nay they were "not aſhamed, neither could they bluſh." When men have the heart to do a very bad thing, they ſeldom want the face to bear it out.

And as for the unreaſonableneſs of vice, though nothing in the world be more evident to a free and impartial judgment, and the ſinner himſelf diſcerns it clearly enough at his firſt ſetting out in a wicked courſe;

—— Video meliora, proboque,
Deteriora ſequor:

He offends againſt the light of his own mind, and does wickedly when he knows better: yet after he hath continued for ſome time in this courſe, and is heartily engaged in it, his fooliſh heart is darken'd, and the notions of good and evil are obſcured and confounded, and things appear to him in a falſe and imperfect light: his luſts do at once blind and bias his underſtanding; and his judgment by degrees goes over to his inclinations; and he cannot think that there ſhould be ſo much reaſon againſt thoſe things for which he hath ſo ſtrong an affection. He is now engaged in a party, and factiouſly concerned to maintain it, and to make the beſt of it; and to that end, he bends all his wits to advance ſuch principles as are fitteſt to juſtify his wicked practices; and in all debates plainly favours that ſide of the queſtion which will give the greateſt countenance and encouragement to them. When men "are corrupt and "do abominable works, they ſay in their hearts, "there is no GOD," that is, they would fain think ſo. And every thing ſerves for an argument to a willing mind; and every little objection appears ſtrong and conſiderable, which makes againſt that which men are loth ſhould be true.

Not that any man ever ſatisfied himſelf in the principles of infidelity, or was able to arrive to a ſteady and unſhaken perſuaſion of the truth of them, ſo as not vehemently to doubt and fear the contrary. However, by this means many men, though they cannot fully comfort, yet they make a ſhift to cheat themſelves; to ſtill their conſciences and lay them aſleep

asleep for a time, so as not to receive any great and frequent disturbance in their course from the checks and rebukes of their own minds. And when these restraints are removed, the work of iniquity goes on amain, being favoured both by wind and tide. SERM. XXIX

3. The difficulty of this change ariseth likewise from the natural and judicial consequences of a great progress and long continuance in an evil course. My meaning is, that inveterate evil habits do partly from their own nature, and partly from the just judgment and permission of God, put men under several disadvantages of moving effectually towards their own recovery.

By a long custom of sinning mens consciences grow brawny, and "seared as it were with a hot "iron;" and by being often trampled upon, they become hard as the beaten road. So that unless it be upon some extraordinary occasion, they are seldom awakened to a sense of their guilt. And when mens hearts are thus hard, the best counsels make but little impression upon them. For they are steel'd against reproof, and impenetrable to good advice; which is therefore seldom offered to them, even by those that wish them well, because they know it to be both unacceptable, and unlikely to prevail. It requires a great deal of good-nature in a very bad man, to be able patiently to bear to be told of his faults.

Besides, that habitual wickedness is naturally apt to banish consideration, to weaken our resolution, and to discourage our hopes both of God's grace and assistance, and of his mercy and forgiveness; which are the best means and encouragement to repentance.

Sin

SERM. XXIX.

Sin is a great enemy to consideration; and especially when men are deeply plunged into it, their condition is so very bad, that they are loth to think of it, and to search into it. A vicious man is a very deformed sight, and to none more than to himself; and therefore he loves to turn his eyes another way, and to divert them as much as he can from looking upon himself. He is afraid to be alone, lest his own mind should arrest him, and his conscience should take the opportunity to call him to an account. And if at any time his own thoughts meet him, and he cannot avoid consideration, he is ready to say as Ahab did to Elijah "Hast thou "found me, O my enemy!" and is as glad to shake it off as a man is to get rid of a creditor, whom, because he knows not how to satisfy, he cares not to speak with him. Consideration is the great troubler and disturber of men, in an evil course, because it would represent to them the plain truth of their case; and therefore they do all they can to keep it off: as those who have improvidently managed their affairs, and been ill husbands of their estates, are loth to make up their accounts, lest by that means they should be forced to understand the worst of their condition.

Or if consideration happen to take them at an advantage, and they are so hard prest by it that they cannot escape the sight of their own condition, yet they find themselves so miserably entangled and hamper'd in an evil course, and bound so fast in the chains of their own wickedness, that they know not how to get loose. Sin is the saddest slavery in the world; it breaks and sinks mens spirits, and makes them

them so base and servile that they have not the courage to rescue themselves. No sort of slaves are so poor-spirited, as they who are in bondage to their lusts. Their power is gone, or if they have any left they have not the heart to make use of it. And though they see and feel their misery, yet they choose rather to sit down in it, and tamely to submit to it, than to make any resolute attempt for their liberty. What the prophet says of whoredom and wine, is proportionably true of other vices, "they "take away the heart." Every lust that we entertain deals with us as Dalilah did with Sampson, not only robs us of our strength but leaves us fast bound: so that if at any time we be awakened to a sense of our condition, and try to rescue ourselves from it, we find that our strength is departed from us, and that we are not able to break loose. SERM. XXIX.

And as long custom and continuance in sin deprives us of our strength, so it discourageth our hopes, both of GOD's grace and assistance, and of his mercy and forgiveness. For why should men expect the continuance of that grace which they have so often received in vain? After so many provocations, how can we look the offended majesty of GOD in the face? how can we lift up our eyes to heaven with any hopes of mercy and forgiveness there? Despair doth almost naturally spring from an evil conscience; and when men are thoroughly awakened to a sense of sin, and of the infinite evil of it, as they cannot easily forgive themselves, so they can hardly believe that there is goodness enough any where to forgive them.

But

SERM. XXIX.

But beſides theſe diſadvantages, which are natural and conſequent upon a vicious courſe; by the juſt judgment of GOD, his ſpirit is withdrawn from them, and they are given up to their own hearts luſts, to commit all iniquity with greedineſs. And then there is hardly any thing left, either to reſtrain them in their evil courſe, or to recover them out of it.

And not only ſo, but by the juſt permiſſion of GOD, as men grow worſe and more wicked, the devil hath a nearer acceſs to them and more immediate power over them. So the ſcripture tells us, that wicked men are "led captive by Satan at his "pleaſure," and that "the evil one works and acts "in the children of diſobedience:" they are as it were poſſeſt and inſpired by him. And what can be expected from this cruel and malicious enemy of mankind, but that he will continually be puſhing them on from one wickedneſs to another, 'till he drive them firſt into deſpair, and then, if GOD permit him, into eternal perdition?

And what a forlorn ſtate is this? when men are thus forſaken of GOD, and left without check, blindly and headily to follow the ſway of their own tempers, and the bent of their own corrupt hearts? when they are continually expoſed to temptations, ſtrongly inviting them to evil; and GOD lets the devil looſe upon them to manage thoſe temptations with his utmoſt skill, and to practiſe all his arts and wiles upon them? In theſe circumſtances men almoſt infallibly run into ſin, as ſure as men wander in the dark, and are in danger of falling in ſlippery places, and of being entangled when they continually walk in

in the midſt of ſnares cunningly laid for them. It is not in men, thus diſabled and entangled, to order their own ſteps, and to reſtrain their inclinations and paſſions in the preſence of a powerful temptation. At the beſt, we need GOD's direction to guide us, his continual grace to uphold us, and to guard and preſerve us from evil; and much more do we ſtand in need of it, when we have brought ourſelves into theſe wretched circumſtances: but then alas! how little reaſon have we to hope for it? SERM. XXIX.

Blind and miſerable men! that in deſpite of all the merciful warnings of GOD's word and providence, will run themſelves into this deſperate ſtate, and never think of returning to a better mind, 'till their retreat is difficult almoſt to an impoſſibility. I proceed to the

II. Head of my diſcourſe, which was to ſhew, that the caſe of theſe perſons, though it be extremely difficult, is not quite deſperate; but after all, there is ſome ground of hope and encouragement left, that they may yet be reclaimed and brought to goodneſs. Indeed, humanely ſpeaking, and according to all appearance and probability, the thing ſeems to be very hopeleſs, and next to an impoſſibility; but yet what our SAVIOUR ſays concerning the difficulty of a rich man's ſalvation will reach alſo to this caſe, though much more difficult; "thoſe things which "are impoſſible with men, are poſſible with GOD."

And this will appear, if we conſider that even in the worſt of men there is ſomething left which tends to reclaim them, to awaken them to conſideration, and to urge and encourage them to a vigorous reſolution of a better courſe: and this, accompanied with a

SERM. XXIX

powerful assistance of God's grace, which when sincerely sought is never to be despaired of, may prove effectual to bring back even the greatest of sinners.

1. There is left, even in the worst of men, a natural sense of the evil and unreasonableness of sin; which can hardly be ever totally extinguished in humane nature. For though the habits of great vices are very apt to harden and stupify men, so that they have seldom a just sense of their evil ways, yet these persons are sometimes under strong convictions, and their consciences do severely check and rebuke them for their faults. They are also, by fits, under great apprehension of the danger of their condition, and that the course which they are in, if they continue in it, will prove fatal to them, and ruin them at last: especially, when their consciences are thoroughly awakened by some great affliction, or the near approach of death, and a lively sense of another world. And the apprehension of a mighty danger will make men to look about them, and to use the best means to avoid it.

2. Very bad men when they have any thoughts of becoming better, are apt to conceive some good hopes of God's grace and mercy. For though they find all the causes and reasons of despair in themselves, yet the consideration of the boundless goodness and compassions of God (how undeserved soever on their part) is apt to kindle some sparks of hope, even in the most desponding mind. His wonderful patience, in the midst of our manifold provocations, cannot but be a good sign to us that he hath no mind that we should perish, but rather that we should come to repentance;

repentance; and if we do repent, we are assured by his promise, that we shall be forgiven. "He that "confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to "forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all un- "righteousness." SERM. XXIX.

3. Who knows what men thoroughly roused and startled may resolve, and do? And a mighty resolution will break through difficulties which seem insuperable. Though we be weak and pitiful creatures; yet nature when it is mightily irritated and stirr'd will do strange things. The resolutions of men upon the brink of despair, have been of an incredible force: and the soul of man in nothing more discovers its divine power and original, than in that spring which is in it, whereby it recovers itself when it is mightily urged and prest. There is a sort of resolution which is in a manner invincible, and hardly any difficulty can resist it or stand before it.

Of this there have been great instances in several kinds. Some by an obstinate resolution, and taking incredible pains with themselves, have mastered great natural vices and defects. As Socrates and Demosthenes, who almost exceeded all mankind in those two things for which by nature they seemed to be least made, and most unfit. One in governing of his passions, and the other in the mighty force and power of his eloquence.

Some that by intemperance have brought themselves to a dropsy, which hath just set them upon the brink of the grave, by a bold and steady purpose to abstain wholly from drink for a long

SERM. XXIX.

time together, have rescued themselves from the jaws of death.

Some that had almost ruined themselves by a careless and dissolute life, and having run themselves out of their estates into debt, and being cast into prison, have there taken up a manly resolution to retrieve and recover themselves; and by the indefatigable labour and study of some years, in that uncomfortable retreat, have mastered the knowledge and skill of one of the most difficult professions, in which they have afterwards proved great and eminent.

And some in the full career of a wicked course, have by a sudden thought and resolution, raised in them and assisted by a mighty grace of God, taken up presently, and made an immediate change from great wickedness and impiety of life, to a very exemplary degree of goodness and virtue.

The two great encouragements to virtue which Pythagoras gave to his scholars were these; and they were worthy of so great a philosopher; First, "Choose always the best course of life, and custom "will soon make it the most pleasant." The other was this, "That power and necessity are neigh-"bours, and never dwell far from one another." When men are prest by a great necessity, when nature is spurr'd up and urged to the utmost, men discover in themselves a power which they thought they had not, and find at last that they can do that which at first they despaired of ever being able to do.

4. The grace and assistance of God when sincerely sought, is never to be despaired of. So that if we do

do but heartily, and in good earneſt reſolve upon a better courſe, and implore the help of GOD's grace to this purpoſe, no degree of it that is neceſſary ſhall be wanting to us. And here is our chief ground of hope. For we are weak and unſtable as water; and when we have taken up good reſolutions, do eaſily ſtart from them. So that freſh ſupplies, and a continued aſſiſtance of GOD's grace is neceſſary to keep up the firſt warmth and vigour of our reſolutions, 'till they prove effectual and victorious. And this grace GOD hath promiſed he will not deny to us, when we are thus diſpoſed for it; "that he will give "his HOLY SPIRIT to them that ask it; that he "will not quench the ſmoking flax, nor break the "bruiſed reed, until he bring forth judgment unto "victory."

All that now remains is to apply this to our ſelves: and we are all concerned in it: for we ſhall all find our ſelves comprehended under one of theſe three Heads, either we are of the number of thoſe few happy perſons, who by the influence and advantage of a good education, were never engaged in a bad courſe: or, of thoſe who have been drawn into vice, but are not yet far gone in it: or, of thoſe who have been long accuſtomed to an evil courſe, and are grown old and ſtiff in it.

The firſt of theſe have great cauſe to thank GOD for this ſingular felicity, that they were never enſnared and intangled in vicious habits, that they have not had the trial of their own weakneſs under this miſerable ſlavery, that they never knew what it was to be out of their own power, to have loſt their liberty and the government of themſelves.

When

SERM. XXIX.

When we hear of the miſerable ſervitude of the poor chriſtians in Turkey, we are apt, as there is great reaſon, to pity them, and to think what a bleſſing of GOD it is to us that we are not in their condition: and yet that ſlavery is not comparable to this, either for the ſad nature, or the diſmal conſequences of it; or for the difficulty of being releaſed from it. And let ſuch perſons, who have been thus happy never to have been engaged in an evil courſe, preſerve their innocency with great tenderneſs and care, as the greateſt jewel in the world. No man knows what he does, and what a foundation of trouble he lays to himſelf, when he forfeits his innocency, and breaks the peace of his own mind; when he yields to a temptation, and makes the firſt ſtep into a bad courſe. He little thinks whither his luſts may hurry him, and what a monſter they may make of him before they have done with him.

2. Thoſe who have been ſeduced, but are not yet deeply engaged in an evil courſe, let them make a ſpeedy retreat, leſt they put it for ever out of their power to return. Perhaps their feet only are yet enſnared, but their hands are at liberty, and they have ſome power left, whereby with an ordinary grace of GOD they may looſe and reſcue themſelves. But after a while their hands may be manacled, and all their power may be gone; and when they are thus "bound hand and foot," they are juſt prepared, and in danger every moment, "to be caſt into "utter darkneſs."

3. As for thoſe, who are gone very far, and are grown old in vice, who can forbear to lament over them?

them? for they are a ſad ſpectacle indeed, and the SERM. XXIX.
trueſt object of pity in the world. And yet their recovery is not utterly to be deſpaired of; "for "with GOD it is poſſible." The SPIRIT of GOD, which hath withdrawn himſelf, or rather hath been driven away by them, may yet be perſuaded to return, and to undertake them once more, if they would but ſeriouſly reſolve upon a change, and heartily beg God's aſſiſtance to that purpoſe. If we would take up a mighty reſolution, we might hope that GOD would afford a miraculous grace to ſecond it, and make it effectual to our recovery. Even in this perverſe and degenerate age in which we live, GOD hath not been wanting to give ſome miraculous inſtances of his grace and mercy to ſinners, and thoſe perhaps equal to any of thoſe we meet with in ſcripture, of Manaſſes, or Mary Magdalane, or the penitent thief; both for the greatneſs of the offenders, and the miracle of their change: to the end that none might deſpair, and for want of the encouragement of an example equal to their own caſe, be diſheartened from ſo noble an enterpriſe. I am loth to put you in mind how bad ſome have been, who yet have been "ſnatched as fire-"brands out of the fire;" and that in ſo ſtrange a manner, that it would even amaze a man to think of the wonder of their recovery: thoſe who have ſunk themſelves into the very depth of infidelity and wickedneſs, have by a mighty hand and outſtretched arm of GOD been pluckt out of this horrible pit. And will we ſtill ſtand it out with GOD, when ſuch great Leaders have given up the cauſe, and have ſurrendred and yielded up themſelves willing

SERM. XXIX.

ing captives to the grace of GOD? that omnipotent grace of GOD, which can eaſily ſubdue the ſtouteſt heart of man, by letting in ſo ſtrong a light upon our minds, and pouring ſuch terrible convictions into our conſciences, that we can find no eaſe but in turning to God.

I hope there are none here ſo bad, as to need all the encouragement to repentance which ſuch examples might give them: encouragement, I ſay, to repentance: for ſurely theſe examples can encourage no man to venture any farther in a wicked courſe: they are ſo very rare, and like the inſtances of thoſe who have been brought back to life after the ſentence of death ſeemed to have been fully executed upon them.

But perhaps ſome will not believe that there have been ſuch examples; or if there have, they impute all this either to a diſturbed imagination, or to the faint and low ſpirits of men under great bodily weakneſs, or to their natural cowardiſe and fear; or to I know not what fooliſh and fantaſtical deſign of completing and finiſhing a wicked life with an hypocritical death. Nothing ſurely is eaſier than to put ſome bad conſtruction upon the beſt things, and ſo ſlur even repentance it ſelf, and almoſt daſh it out of countenance by ſome bold, and perhaps witty ſaying about it. But oh that men were wiſe! oh that men were wiſe! that they underſtood, and would but conſider their latter end! Come, let us neither trifle, nor diſſemble in this matter; I dare ſay every man's conſcience is convinced, that they who have led very ill lives, have ſo much reaſon for repentance, that we may eaſily believe it

to

to be real. However, of all things in the world, let us not make a mock of repentance; that which must be our last sanctuary and refuge, and which we must all come to before we die, "or it had "been better for us we had never been born." Therefore, "let my counsel be acceptable unto you, break "off your sins by repentance, and your iniquities "by righteousness:" and that instantly, and without delay; "lest any of you be hardned through the "deceitfulness of sin." If we have been enslaved but a little to a vicious course, we shall find it a task difficult enough to assert our own liberty; "to "break these bonds in sunder, and cast these cords "from us:" but if we have been long under this bondage, we have done so much to undo our selves, and to make our case desperate, that it is GOD's infinite mercy to us that there is yet hope. Therefore, "give glory to the LORD your GOD, before "he cause darkness, and your feet stumble upon "the dark mountains, and while you look for light, "he turn it into darkness and the shadow of death." I will conclude with that encouraging invitation, even to the greatest of sinners to repentance, from the mouth of GOD himself, Isa. lv. "Incline your "ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall "live: seek the Lord while he may be found; and "call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked "forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his "thoughts, and let him return unto the LORD, "and he will have mercy upon him, and to our GOD, "for he will abundantly pardon."

To him let us apply our selves, and humbly beseech him, "who is mighty to save," that he would

ſtretch forth the right hand of his power for our deliverance, from this miſerable and cruel bondage of our luſts: "and that as the rain cometh down from "heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth "the earth, and maketh it to bring forth and bud; "ſo he would grant that his word may not return "void, but accompliſh his pleaſure, and proſper in "the thing to which he ſent it," for his mercy ſake in JESUS CHRIST, to whom with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST, be all honour and glory now and for ever. Amen.

SERMON XXX.

The neceſſity of the knowledge of the holy ſcriptures.

MATTHEW xxiii. 13.

Wo unto you ſcribes and phariſees, hypocrites; for ye ſhut up the kingdom of heaven againſt men; and ye neither go in your ſelves, neither ſuffer ye them that are entring to go in.

SERM. XXX.

THE ſcribes ſo often mentioned in the goſpel, were the great doctors among the jews, the teachers and interpreters of the law of GOD. And becauſe many of them were of the ſect of the phariſees, which above all others pretended to skill and knowledge in the law, therefore it is that our bleſſed SAVIOUR does ſo often put the ſcribes and phariſees together. And theſe were the men

men of chief authority in the jewiſh church; who equalled their own unwritten word and traditions with the law of GOD: nay our SAVIOUR tells us, "they made the commandments of GOD of none "effect by their traditions." They did in effect aſſume to themſelves infallibility; and all that oppoſed and contradicted them, they branded with the odious name of hereticks. Againſt theſe our SAVIOUR denounceth this wo here in the text, "wo "unto you ſcribes and phariſees, hypocrites; for ye "ſhut up the kingdom of heaven againſt men, *&c.*" SERM. XXX.

All the difficulty in the words is, what is here meant "by ſhutting up the kingdom of heaven "againſt men:" St. Luke expreſſes it more plainly, "ye have taken away the key of knowledge, "ye entred not in your ſelves, and them that were "entring in, ye hindered." By putting theſe two expreſſions together we ſhall the more eaſily come at the meaning of the text. "Ye have taken away the "key of knowledge, and have ſhut up the kingdom "of heaven againſt men." This metaphor of the key of knowledge, is undoubtedly an alluſion to that known cuſtom among the jews in the admiſſion of their doctors. For to whomſoever they gave authority to interpret the law and the Prophets, they were ſolemnly admitted into that office by delivering to them a key and a table-book. So that by the key of knowledge is here meant the interpretation and underſtanding of the ſcriptures; and by taking away the key of knowledge, not only that they arrogated to themſelves alone the underſtanding of the ſcriptures, but likewiſe that they had conveyed away this key of knowledge, and as it were hid it

SERM. XXX.

out of the way, neither uſing it themſelves as they ought, nor ſuffering others to make uſe of it.

And thus "they ſhut the kingdom of heaven "againſt men;" which is very fitly ſaid of thoſe who have locked the door againſt them that were going in, and have taken away the key. By all which it appears, that the plain meaning of our SAVIOUR in theſe metaphorical expreſſions is, that the ſcribes and teachers of the law, under a pretence of interpreting the ſcriptures, had perverted them, and kept the true knowledge of them from the people: eſpecially thoſe prophecies of the old teſtament which concerned the MESSIAS. And by this means the kingdom of heaven was ſhut againſt men: And they not only rejected the truth themſelves, but by keeping men in ignorance of the true meaning of the ſcriptures, they hindered many from embracing our SAVIOUR's doctrines, and entring into the kingdom of heaven, who were otherwiſe well enough diſpoſed for it.

Having thus explained the words, I ſhall from the main ſcope and deſign of them obſerve to you theſe two things.

1. The neceſſity of the knowledge of the holy ſcriptures in order to our eternal ſalvation. It is called by our SAVIOUR the key of knowledge, that which lets men into the kingdom of heaven.

2. The great and inexcuſable fault of thoſe who deprive the people of the knowledge of the ſcriptures. "They ſhut the kingdom of heaven againſt "men," and do what in them lies to hinder their eternal ſalvation; and therefore our SAVIOUR denounceth ſo heavy a wo againſt them.

I ſhall

I ſhall ſpeak briefly to theſe two obſervations; and then apply them to thoſe who are principally concerned in them. SERM. XXX.

I. Firſt, I obſerve hence the neceſſity of the knowledge of the holy ſcriptures, in order to our eternal ſalvation. This is by our SAVIOUR called the key of knowledge, that which lets men into the kingdom of heaven.

Knowledge is neceſſary to religion: it is neceſſary to the being of it; and neceſſary to the life and practice of it. "Without faith (ſays the apoſtle) it "is impoſſible to pleaſe GOD:" becauſe faith is an act of the underſtanding, and does neceſſarily ſuppoſe ſome knowledge and apprehenſion of what we believe. To all acts of religion there is neceſſarily required ſome act of the underſtanding; ſo that without knowledge there can be no devotion in the ſervice of GOD, no obedience to his laws. Religion begins in the underſtanding, and from thence deſcends upon the heart and life. "If ye know "theſe things (ſays our SAVIOUR) happy are ye "if ye do them." We muſt firſt know GOD, before we can worſhip him; and underſtand what is his will, before we can do it.

This is ſo very evident, that one would think there needed no diſcourſe about it. And yet there are ſome in the world that cry up ignorance as the mother of devotion. And to ſhew them that we do not wrong them in this matter, Mr. Ruſhworth in his dialogues (a book in great vogue among the papiſts here in England) does expreſly reckon up ignorance among the parents of religion. And can any thing be ſaid more abſurdly, and more to the diſpa-

SERM. XXX. diſparagement of religion, than to derive the pedigree of the moſt excellent thing in the world from ſo obſcure and ignoble an original? and to make that which the ſcripture calls the beginning of wiſdom, and the excellency of knowledge, to be the offspring of ignorance and a child of darkneſs? Ignorance indeed may be the cauſe of wonder and admiration, and the mother of folly and ſuperſtition: but ſure religion is of a nobler extraction, and is the iſſue and reſult of the beſt wiſdom and knowledge; and deſcends from above, from the giver of every good and perfect gift, even the father of lights.

And as knowledge in general is neceſſary to religion, ſo more particularly the knowledge of the holy ſcriptures is neceſſary to our eternal ſalvation: becauſe theſe are the great and ſtanding revelation of GOD to mankind; wherein the nature of GOD, and his will concerning our duty, and the terms and conditions of our eternal happineſs in another world, are fully and plainly declared to us.

The ſcriptures are the word of GOD; and from whence can we learn the will of GOD ſo well as from his own mouth? they are the great inſtrument of our ſalvation; and ſhould not every man be acquainted with that which alone can perfectly inſtruct him what he muſt believe, and what he muſt do that he may be ſaved? this is the teſtimony which the ſcripture gives of it ſelf, that it is "able "to make men wiſe unto ſalvation:" and is it not very fit that every man ſhould have this wiſdom, and in order thereunto the free uſe of that book from whence this wiſdom is to be learned?

II. Secondly,

II. Secondly, I observe the great and inexcusable fault of those who keep men in ignorance of religion, and take away from them so excellent and necessary a means of divine knowledge as the holy scriptures are. This our SAVIOUR calls "taking "away the key of knowledge, and shutting the "kingdom of heaven against men," that is, doing what in them lies to render it impossible for men to be saved. For this he denounceth a terrible wo against the teachers of the jewish church: though they did not proceed so far as to deprive men of the use of the holy scriptures, but only of the right knowledge and understanding of them. This alone is a horrible impiety, to lead men into a false sense and interpretation of scripture, but much greater to forbid them the reading of it. This is to stop knowledge at the very fountain-head; and not only to lead men into error, but to take away from them all possibility of rectifying their mistakes. And can there be a greater sacrilege, than to rob men of the word of GOD, the best means in the world of acquainting them with the will of GOD and their duty, and the way to eternal happiness? To keep the people in ignorance of that which is necessary to save them, "is "to judge them unworthy of eternal life," and to declare it does not belong to them, and maliciously to contrive the eternal ruin and destruction of their souls. SERM. XXX.

To lock up the scriptures and the service of GOD from the people in an unknown tongue, what is this but in effect to forbid men to know GOD and to serve him; to render them incapable of knowing "what is the good and acceptable will of GOD;"

of

SERM. XXX.

of joining in his worſhip, or performing any part of it, or receiving any benefit or edification from it; and what is, if this be not, to ſhut the kingdom of heaven againſt men? This is ſo outrageous a cruelty to the ſouls of men, that it is not to be excuſed upon any pretence whatſoever: this is to take the ſureſt and moſt effectual way in the world to deſtroy thoſe for whom CHRIST died, and directly to thwart the great deſign of GOD our SAVIOUR, "who would "have all men to be ſaved, and to come to the "knowledge of the truth." Men may miſcarry with their knowledge, but they are ſure to periſh for want of it.

The beſt things in the world have their inconveniences attending them, and are liable to be abuſed; but ſurely men are not to be ruined and damned for fear of abuſing their knowledge, or for the prevention of any other inconvenience whatſoever. Beſides, this is to croſs the very end of the ſcriptures, and the deſign of GOD in inſpiring men to write them. Can any man think that GOD ſhould ſend this great light of his word into the world, for the prieſts to hide it under a buſhel; and not rather that it ſhould be ſet up to the greateſt advantage for the enlightening of the world? St. Paul tells us, Rom. xv. 4. "That whatſoever things were written, were "written for our learning, that we through pa-"tience and comfort of the ſcriptures might have "hope." And 2 Tim. iii. 16. "That all ſcripture "is given by inſpiration of GOD; and is profitable "for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for in-"ſtruction in righteouſneſs." And if the ſcriptures were written for theſe ends, can any man have the

the face to pretend that they do not concern the people as well as their teachers? Nay St. Paul expreſly tells the church of Rome, that they were written for their learning, however it happens that they are not now permitted to make uſe of them. Are the ſcriptures ſo uſeful and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for inſtruction in righteouſneſs? and why may they not be uſed by the people for thoſe ends for which they were given? 'Tis true indeed they are fit for the moſt knowing and learned, and ſufficient to make "the man of GOD perfect, "and thoroughly furniſhed to every good work," as the apoſtle there tells us. But does this exclude their being profitable alſo to the people; who may reaſonably be preſumed to ſtand much more in need of all means and helps of inſtruction than their teachers? And though there be many difficulties and obſcurities in the ſcriptures, enough to exerciſe the skill and wit of the learned, yet are they not therefore either uſeleſs or dangerous to the people. The ancient fathers of the church were of another mind. St. Chryſoſtom tells us that, "Whatever things are "neceſſary, are manifeſt in the ſcriptures." And St. Auſtin, "That all things are plain in the ſcrip-"ture, which concern faith and a good life; and "that thoſe things which are neceſſary to the ſal-"vation of men, are not ſo hard to be come at; but "that as to thoſe things which the ſcripture plainly "contains, it ſpeaks without diſguiſe like a familiar "friend to the heart of the learned and unlearned." And upon theſe and ſuch-like conſiderations, the fathers did every-where in their orations and homilies charge and exhort the people to be converſant in the

SERM. XXX

holy ſcriptures, to read them daily and diligently and attentively. And I challenge our adverſaries to ſhew me where any of the ancient fathers do diſcourage the people from reading the ſcriptures, much leſs forbid them ſo to do. So that they who do it now have no cloke for their ſin: and they who pretend ſo confidently to antiquity in other caſes, are by the evidence of truth forced to acknowledge that it is againſt them in this. Though they have ten thouſand ſchoolmen on their ſide, yet have they not one father, nor the leaſt pretence of ſcripture, or rag of antiquity to cover their nakedneſs in this point.

With great reaſon then does our SAVIOUR denounce ſo heavy a wo againſt ſuch teachers. Of old in the like caſe GOD by his prophet ſeverely threatens the prieſts of the jewiſh church, for not inſtructing the people in the knowledge of GOD, Hoſea iv. 6. "My people are deſtroyed for lack "of knowledge: becauſe thou haſt rejected know-"ledge, I will alſo reject thee; thou ſhalt be no "more a prieſt to me: ſeeing thou haſt forgotten "the law of thy GOD, I will alſo forget thy chil-"dren." GOD, you ſee, lays the ruin of ſo many ſouls at their doors, and will require their blood at their hands. So many as periſh for want of knowledge, and eternally miſcarry by being deprived of the neceſſary means of ſalvation, their deſtruction ſhall be charged upon thoſe who "have taken away "the key of knowledge, and ſhut the kingdom of "heaven againſt men."

And it is juſt with GOD to puniſh ſuch perſons, not only as the occaſion, but as the authors of their ruin,

ruin. For who can judge otherwise, but that they who deprive men of the necessary means to any end, do purposely design to hinder them of attaining that end? And whatever may be pretended in this case; to deprive men of the holy scriptures, and to keep them ignorant of the service of GOD, and yet while they do so, to make a shew of an earnest desire of their salvation, is just such a mockery, as if one of you that is a master should tell his prentice, how much you desire he should thrive in the world, and be a rich man, but all the while keep him ignorant of his trade in order to his being rich; and with the strictest care imaginable conceal from him the best means of learning, that whereby alone he is likely to thrive and get an estate. "Wo unto "you scribes and pharisees, hypocrites"

By what hath been discoursed upon this argument, you will easily perceive where the application is like to fall. For the wo denounced by our SAVIOUR here in the text against the scribes and pharisees, falls every whit as heavy upon the pastors and teachers of the Roman church. They have taken away the key of knowledge with a witness; not only depriving the people of the right understanding of the scriptures, but of the very use of them: as if they were so afraid they should understand them, that they dare not suffer them so much as to be acquainted with them.

This tyranny that church hath exercised over those of her communion for several hundreds of years. It grew upon them indeed by degrees: for as by the inundation of barbarous nations upon the Roman empire the Romans lost their language by

SERM. XXX.

degrees, ſo the governors of that church ſtill kept up the ſcriptures and the ſervice of GOD in the latin tongue; which at laſt was wholly unknown to the common people. And about the ninth and tenth centuries, when by the general conſent of all their own hiſtorians groſs darkneſs and ignorance covered this part of the world, the pope and the prieſts took away the key of knowledge, and did (as I may ſo ſay) put it under the door for ſeveral ages; 'till the reformation fetched it out again, and rubbed off the ruſt of it.

And I profeſs ſeriouſly that hardly any thing in the world was ever to me more aſtoniſhing, than this uncharitable and cruel uſage of the people in the church of Rome. And I cannot tell which to wonder at moſt, the inſolence of their governors in impoſing upon men this ſenſeleſs way of ſerving GOD, or the patience ſhall I call it, or rather ſtupidity of the people in enduring to be ſo intolerably abuſed. Why ſhould reaſonable creatures be treated at this rude and barbarous rate? As if they were unworthy to be acquainted with the will of GOD; and as if that which every man ought to do, were not fit for every man to know: as if the common people had only bodies to be preſent at the ſervice of GOD, but no ſouls; or as if they were all diſtracted and out of their wits, and it were a dangerous thing to let in the light upon them.

But to ſpeak more diſtinctly. There are two things we charge them withal, and which they are not able to deny. Their performing the publick ſervice of GOD in an unknown tongue; and depriving the people of the uſe of the ſcriptures. And I

ſhall

ſhall firſt tell you what we have to ſay againſt theſe things, and then conſider what they pretend for them. SERM. XXX.

1. As for their performing the ſervice of GOD in a tongue unknown to the people. And I begin with St. Paul, who in his firſt epiſtle to the Corinthians hath a whole chapter on purpoſe to ſhew the unreaſonableneſs of this thing, and how contrary it is to the edification of chriſtians. His diſcourſe is ſo plain and ſo well known, that I ſhall not particularly inſiſt upon it. Eraſmus in his annotations upon this chapter, breaks out (as well he might) into admiration at the practice of the church of Rome in his time. *Hâc in re mirum, quàm mutata ſit Eccleſiæ conſuetudo:* "It is wonderful (ſays he) how the cuſtom "of the church is altered in this matter. St. Paul "had rather ſpeak five words with underſtanding, "and ſo as to teach others, than ten thouſand in an "unknown tongue." Why does the church doubt to follow ſo great an authority, or rather how dares ſhe diſſent from it?

As for the practice of the ancient church let Origen bear witneſs. "The Grecians (ſaith he) in their "prayers uſe the Greek, and the Romans the Latin "tongue; and ſo every one according to his lan-"guage prayeth unto GOD, and praiſeth him as he is "able."

And not only in Origen's time, but for more than the firſt ſix hundred years, the ſervice of GOD was always performed in a known tongue. And this the learned men of their own church do not deny. And cardinal Cajetan (as Caſſander tells us) ſaid it was much better this cuſtom were reſtored; and being reproved

SERM. XXX.

proved for ſaying ſo, he ſaid he learned it from St. Paul. And Bellarmine himſelf confeſſeth that the Armenians, Egyptians, Ethiopians, Ruſſians, and others do uſe their own language in their liturgies at this day.

But it is otherwiſe now in the church of Rome, and hath been for ſeveral ages. And it ſeems they lay great ſtreſs upon it, not only as a thing of great uſe, but neceſſity. For pope Gregory VII. forbids the prince of Bohemia to permit to the people the celebration of divine offices in the Sclavonian tongue; and commands him to oppoſe them herein with all his forces. It ſeems he thought it a cauſe worthy the fighting for; and that it were much better the people ſhould be killed, than ſuffered to underſtand their prayers.

But let us reaſon this matter a little calmly with them. Is it neceſſary for men to underſtand any thing they do in religion? and is not prayer one of the moſt ſolemn parts of religion? and why then ſhould not men underſtand their prayers as well as any thing elſe they do in religion? Is it good that people ſhould underſtand their private prayers? that (we thank them) they allow, and why not publick as well? Is there leſs of religion in publick prayers? is GOD leſs honoured by them? or are we not as capable of being edified and of having our hearts and affections moved and excited by them? Where then lies the difference? The more I conſider it, the more I am at a loſs, what tolerable reaſon any man can give why people ſhould not underſtand their publick devotions as well as their private. If men cannot heartily and devoutly pray alone, without

SERM. XXX.

out underſtanding what they ask of GOD, no more (ſay I) can they heartily and devoutly join in the publick prayers which are made by the prieſt, without underſtanding what they are. If it be enough for the prieſt to underſtand them, why ſhould not the prieſt only be preſent at them? unleſs the people do not meet to worſhip GOD, but only to wait upon the prieſt. But by ſaying the prieſt underſtands them, it ſeems it is better ſomebody ſhould underſtand them than not; and why is not that which is good for the prieſt, good for the people?

So that the true ſtate of the controverſy is, whether it be fit that the people ſhould be edified in the ſervice of GOD; and whether it be fit the church ſhould order things contrary to edification? For it is plain that the ſervice of GOD in an unknown tongue is uſeleſs and unprofitable to the people: nay, it is evidently no publick ſervice of GOD, when the prieſt only underſtands it. For how can they be ſaid to be publick prayers, if the people do not join in them? and how can they join in that they do not underſtand? and to what purpoſe are leſſons of ſcripture read, if people are to learn nothing by them? and how ſhould they learn when they do not underſtand? This is as if one ſhould pretend to teach a man Greek, by reading him lectures every day out of an Arabick and Perſian book, of which he underſtands not one ſyllable.

II. As to their depriving the people of the uſe of the holy ſcriptures. Our bleſſed SAVIOUR exhorts the jews to "ſearch the ſcriptures;" and St. Paul chargeth the chriſtians that "the word of GOD "ſhould dwell richly in them;" and the ancient fathers

SERM. XXX.

fathers of the church do moſt frequently and earneſtly recommend to the people the reading and ſtudy of the ſcriptures: how comes the caſe now to be ſo altered? ſure the word of GOD is not changed; that certainly abides and continues the ſame for ever.

I ſhall by and by examine what the church of Rome pretends in excuſe of this ſacrilege. In the mean time I do not ſee what conſiderable objections can be made againſt the people's reading of the ſcriptures, which would not have held as well againſt the writing and publiſhing of them at firſt in a language underſtood by the people: as the old teſtament was by the Jews, and the epiſtles of the apoſtles by the churches to whom they were written, and the goſpels both by Jews and Greeks. Were there no difficulties and obſcurities then in the ſcriptures, capable of being wreſted by the unſtable and unlearned? were not people then liable to error, and was there no danger of hereſy in thoſe times? And yet theſe are their great objections againſt putting the ſcriptures into the hands of the people. Which is juſt like their arguing againſt giving the cup to the laity from the inconveniency of their beards, leſt ſome of the conſecrated wine ſhould be ſpilt upon them: as if errors and beards were inconveniences lately ſprung up in the world, and which mankind were not liable to in the firſt ages of chriſtianity.

But if there were the ſame dangers and inconveniences in all ages, this reaſon makes againſt the publiſhing of the ſcriptures to the people at firſt, as much as againſt permitting them the uſe of them now. And in truth all theſe objections are againſt the

the scripture itself: and that which the church of Rome would find fault with if they durst, is, that there should be any such book in the world, and that it should be in any body's hands, learned or unlearned; for if it be dangerous to any, none are so capable of doing mischief with it as men of wit and learning. So that at the bottom, if they would speak out, the quarrel is against the scriptures themselves. This is too evident by the counsel given to pope Julius III. by the bishops met at Bononia to consult about the establishment of the Roman see: where among other things, they gave this as their last advice, and as the greatest and weightiest of all, "That by all means as little of the gospel as might "be, especially in the vulgar tongue, should be "read to the people; and that little which was in "the mass ought to be sufficient: neither should it "be permitted to any mortal to read more. For so "long (say they) as men were contented with that "little, all things went well with them; but quite "otherwise, since more was commonly read." And speaking of the scripture, they give this remarkable testimony and commendation of it; "This, in short, "is that book which, above all others, hath raised "those tempests and whirlwinds, which we were al-"most carried away with. And in truth, if any "one diligently considers it, and compares it with "what is done in our church, he will find them "very contrary to each other, and our doctrine not "only to be very different from it, but repugnant "to it." If this be the case, they do like the rest of the children of this world prudently enough in their generation: Can we blame them for being

SERM. XXX.

againſt the ſcriptures, when the ſcriptures are acknowledged to be ſo clearly againſt them? But ſurely no body that conſidereth theſe things would be of that church, which is brought by the undeniable evidence of the things themſelves to this ſhameful confeſſion, that ſeveral of their doctrines and practices are very contrary to the word of GOD.

Much more might have been ſaid againſt the practice of the church of Rome in theſe two particulars, but this is ſufficient.

I ſhall in the ſecond place conſider, what is pretended for them. And indeed what can be pretended in juſtification of ſo contumelious an affront to mankind, ſo great a tyranny and cruelty to the ſouls of men? Hath GOD forbidden the people to look into the ſcriptures? no; quite contrary. Was it the practice of the ancient church to lay this reſtraint upon men; or to celebrate the ſervice of GOD in an unknown tongue? our adverſaries themſelves have not the face to pretend this. I ſhall truly repreſent the ſubſtance of what they ſay in theſe two points.

I. As to the ſervice of GOD in an unknown tongue, they ſay theſe four things for themſelves.

1. That the people do exerciſe a general devotion, and come with an intention to ſerve GOD, and that is accepted, though they do not particularly underſtand the prayers that are made, and the leſſons that are read.

But is this all that is intended in the ſervice of GOD? does not St. Paul expreſly require more? that the underſtanding of the people ſhould be edified by the particular ſervice that is performed? And if what

is

is done be not particularly underſtood, he tells us the people are not edified, nor can ſay amen to the prayers and thankſgivings that are put up to GOD; and that any man that ſhould come in, and find people ſerving of GOD in this unprofitable and unreaſonable manner, would conclude that they were mad. SERM. XXX.

And if there be any general devotion in the people, it is becauſe in general they underſtand what they are about; and why may they not as well underſtand the particular ſervice that is performed, that ſo they might exerciſe a particular devotion? So that they are devout no farther than they underſtand; and conſequently as to what they do not underſtand, had every whit as good be abſent.

2. They ſay, the prayers are to GOD, and he underſtands them; and that is enough. But what harm were it, if all they that pray underſtood them alſo? Or indeed how can men pray to GOD without underſtanding what they ask of him? Is not prayer a part of the chriſtian worſhip? and is not that a reaſonable ſervice? and is any ſervice reaſonable that is not directed by our underſtandings, and accompanied with our hearts and affections?

But then what ſay they to the leſſons and exhortations of ſcripture, which are likewiſe read to the people in an unknown tongue? Are theſe directed to GOD, or to the people only? And are they not deſigned by GOD for their inſtruction; and read either to that purpoſe or none? And is it poſſible to inſtruct men by what they do not underſtand? This is a new and wonderful way of teaching, by concealing from the people the things which they

SERM. XXX.

ſhould learn. It is not all one, as to all purpoſes of edification, as if the ſcriptures were not read, or any thing elſe in the place of them? as they many times do their legends, which the wiſer ſort among them do not believe when they read them. For all things are alike to them that underſtand none; as all things are of a colour in the dark. Ignorance knows no difference of things; it is only knowledge that can diſtinguiſh.

They ſay that ſome do, at leaſt in ſome meaſure, underſtand the particular prayers. If they do, that is no thanks to them. It is by accident if they are more knowing than the reſt; and more than the church either deſires or intends. For if they deſired it, they might order their ſervice ſo, as every man might underſtand it.

4. They ſay that it is convenient that GOD ſhould be ſerved and worſhipped in the ſame language all the world over. Convenient for whom? for GOD? or for the people? not for GOD ſurely. For he underſtands all other languages as well as Latin, and for any thing we know to the contrary likes them as well. And certainly it cannot be ſo convenient for the people, becauſe they generally underſtand no language but their own; and it is very inconvenient they ſhould not underſtand what they do in the ſervice of GOD. But perhaps they mean that it is convenient for the Roman church to have it ſo; becauſe this will look like an argument that they are the catholick or univerſal church, when the language which was originally theirs ſhall be the univerſal language in which all nations ſhall ſerve GOD; and by this means alſo they may bring all nations to be of

their

their religion, and yet make them never the wiſer; and this is a very great convenience, becauſe knowledge is a troubleſome thing, and ignorance very quiet and peaceable, rendring men fit to be governed, and unfit to diſpute. SERM. XXX.

II. As to their depriving the people of the ſcriptures, the ſum of what they ſay may be reduced to theſe three heads.

1. That the church can give leave to men to read the ſcriptures. But this not without great trouble and difficulty: there muſt be a licence for it under the hand of the biſhop or inquiſitor, by the advice of the prieſt or confeſſor, concerning the fitneſs of the perſon that deſires this privilege; and we may be ſure they will think none fit, but thoſe of whom they have the greateſt confidence and ſecurity: and whoever preſumes to do it otherwiſe, is to be denied abſolution; which is, as much as in them lies, to damn men for preſuming to read the word of GOD without their leave.

And, whatever they may allow here in England, where they hold their people upon more ſlippery terms, yet this privilege is very rarely granted where they are in full poſſeſſion of their full power, and have the people perfectly under their yoke.

2. They tell us they inſtruct the people otherwiſe. This indeed were ſomething if they did it to purpoſe; but generally they do it very ſparingly and ſlightly. Their ſermons are commonly made up of feigned ſtories and miracles of ſaints, and exhortations to the worſhip of them, (and eſpecially of the bleſſed virgin) and of their images and relicks. And for the truth of this I appeal to the innumerable volumes

SERM. XXX.

volumes of their ſermons and poſtils in print; which I ſuppoſe are none of their worſt. I am ſure Eraſmus ſays that in his time in ſeveral countries, the people did ſcarce once in half a year hear a profitable ſermon to exhort them to true piety. Indeed they allow the people ſome catechiſms and manuals of devotion; and yet in many of them they have the conſcience and the confidence to ſteal away the ſecond commandment in the face of the eighth.

But to bring the matter to a point, if thoſe helps of inſtruction are agreeable to the ſcriptures, why are they ſo afraid the people ſhould read the ſcriptures? if they are not, why do they deceive and delude them?

3. They ſay that people are apt to wreſt the ſcriptures to their own deſtruction, and that the promiſcuous uſe of them hath been the great occaſion of hereſies. It cannot be denied to be the condition of the very beſt things in the world, that they are liable to be abuſed: health, and light, and liberty, as well as knowledge. But muſt all theſe be therefore taken away? This very inconvenience of peoples wreſting the ſcriptures to their own ruin St. Peter takes notice of in his days; but he does not therefore forbid men the reading of them, as his moſt prudent ſucceſſors have done ſince. Suppoſe the reading of the ſcriptures hath been the occaſion of hereſies; were there ever more than in the firſt ages of chriſtianity? and yet neither the apoſtles nor their ſucceſſors ever preſcribed this remedy. But are they in earneſt? muſt not men know the truth for fear of falling into error? becauſe men may poſſibly miſs their way at noon-day, muſt they never travel but in the night, when they are ſure to loſe it?

And

SERM. XXX.

And when all is done, this is not true, that hereſies have ſprung from this cauſe. They have generally been broached by the learned, from whom the ſcriptures neither were, nor could be concealed. And for this I appeal to the hiſtory and experience of all ages. I am well aſſured the ancient fathers were of another mind. St. Chryſoſtom ſays, "If "men would be converſant in the ſcriptures, and attend to them, they would not only not fall into "errors themſelves, but reſcue thoſe that are deceived:" and "that the ſcriptures would inſtruct "men both in right opinions and a good life." And St. Hierome more expreſly to our purpoſe. "That "infinite evils ariſe from the ignorance of the ſcriptures; and that from that cauſe the moſt part of "hereſies have come."

But if what they ſay were true, is not this to lay the blame of all the ancient hereſies upon the ill management of things by our SAVIOUR, and his apoſtles, and the holy fathers of the church for ſo many ages, and their imprudent diſpenſing of the ſcriptures to the people? this indeed is to charge the matter home; and yet this conſequence is unavoidable. For the church of Rome cannot juſtify the piety and prudence of their preſent practices, without accuſing all theſe.

But the thing which they mainly rely upon as to both theſe practices is this, that though theſe things were otherwiſe in the apoſtles times, and in the ancient church, yet the church hath power to alter them according to the exigence and circumſtances of time. I have purpoſely reſerved this for the laſt place, becauſe it is their laſt refuge; and if this fail them they are gone.

To

SERM. XXX.

To ſhew the weakneſs of this pretence, we will, if they pleaſe, take it for granted, that the governors of the church have in no age more power, than the apoſtles had in theirs. Now St. Paul tells us, 2 Cor. x. 8. that the authority which the apoſtles had given them from the LORD, was only "for edification but not for deſtruction:" and the ſame St. Paul makes it the buſineſs of a whole chapter to ſhew that the performing the publick ſervice of GOD, and particularly praying in an unknown tongue, are contrary to edification; from which premiſes the concluſion is plain, that the apoſtles themſelves had no authority to appoint the ſervice of GOD to be performed in an unknown tongue; and ſurely it is arrogance for the church in any age to pretend greater authority than the apoſtles had.

This is the ſum of what our adverſaries ſay in juſtification of themſelves in theſe points. And there is no doubt, but that men of wit and confidence will always make a ſhift to ſay ſomething for any thing; and ſome way or other blanch over the blackeſt and moſt abſurd things in the world. But I leave it to the judgment of mankind whether any thing be more unreaſonable than to tell men in effect, that it is fit they ſhould underſtand as little of religion as is poſſible; that GOD hath publiſhed a very dangerous book, with which it is not ſafe for the people to be familiarly acquainted; that our bleſſed SAVIOUR and his apoſtles, and the ancient chriſtian church for more than ſix hundred years, were not wiſe managers of religion, nor prudent diſpenſers of the ſcriptures; but like fond and fooliſh fathers put a knife and a ſword into the hands of their children,

dren, with which they might eaſily have foreſeen what miſchief they would do to themſelves and others. And who would not chooſe to be of ſuch a church which is provided of ſuch excellent and effectual means of ignorance, ſuch wiſe and infallible methods for the prevention of knowledge in the people, and ſuch variety of cloſe ſhutters to keep out the light? SERM. XXX.

I have choſen to inſiſt upon this argument, becauſe it is ſo very plain, that the moſt ordinary capacity may judge of this uſage and dealing with the ſouls of men; which is ſo very groſs that every man muſt needs be ſenſible of it; becauſe it toucheth men in the common rights of humane nature, which belong to them as much as the light of heaven, and the air we breathe in.

It requires no ſubtilty of wit, no skill in antiquity, to underſtand theſe controverſies between us and the church of Rome. For there are no fathers to be pretended on both ſides in theſe queſtions: they yield we have antiquity on ours: and we refer it to the common ſenſe of mankind, which church, that of Rome or ours, hath all the right and reaſon in the world on her ſide in theſe debates? And, who they are that tyrannize over chriſtians, the governors of their church, or ours? who uſe the people like ſons and freemen, and who like ſlaves? who feed the flock of CHRIST committed to them, and who take the children's bread from them? Who they are that when their children ask bread, for bread give them a ſtone, and for an egg a ſerpent? I mean the legends of their ſaints, inſtead of the holy ſcriptures

SERM. XXX.

" which are able to make men wiſe unto ſalvation:" and who are they that lie moſt juſtly under the ſuſpicion of errors and corruptions, they who bring their doctrine and practices into the open light, and are willing to have them tried by the true touchſtone, the word of GOD; or they who ſhun the light, and decline all manner of trial and examination? and who are moſt likely to carry on a worldly deſign, they who drive a trade of ſuch mighty gain and advantage under pretence of religion, and make ſuch markets of the ignorance and ſins of the people; or we whom malice itſelf cannot charge with ſerving any worldly deſign by any allowed doctrine or practice of our religion? For we make no money of the miſtakes of the people, nor do we fill their heads with vain fears of new places of torment, to make them willing to empty their purſes in a vainer hope of being delivered out of them. We do not, like them, pretend a mighty bank and treaſure of merits in the church, which they ſell to the people for ready money, giving them bills of exchange from the pope to purgatory; when they who grant them have no reaſon to believe they will avail them, or be accepted in the other world.

For our parts, we have no fear that our people ſhould underſtand religion too well: we could wiſh, with Moſes, " that all the LORD's people were prophets:" we ſhould be heartily glad the people would read the holy ſcriptures more diligently, being ſufficiently aſſured that it is their own fault if they learn any thing but what is good from thence: we have no doctrines or practices contrary to ſcripture, and conſequently

quently no occaſion to keep it cloſe from the ſight of the people, or to hide any of the commandments of GOD from them: we leave theſe mean arts to thoſe who ſtand in need of them. SERM. XXX.

In a word, there is nothing which GOD hath ſaid to men, which we deſire ſhould be concealed from them: nay, we are willing the people ſhould examine what we teach, and bring all our doctrines "to "the law and to the teſtimony;" and if they be not according to this rule, they may neither believe them nor us. 'Tis only things falſe and adulterate which ſhun the light and fear the touchſtone. We have that ſecurity of the truth of our religion, and of the agreeableneſs of it to the word of GOD; that honeſt confidence of the goodneſs of our cauſe, that we do not forbid the people to read the beſt books our adverſaries can write againſt it.

And now let any impartial man judge whether this be not a better argument of a good cauſe, to leave men at liberty to try the grounds of their religion, than the courſes which are taken in the church of Rome, to awe men with an inquiſition; and, as much as is poſſible, to keep the common people in ignorance, not only of what their late adverſaries, the proteſtants, but their chief and ancient adverſary, the ſcriptures, have to ſay againſt them.

A man had need of more than common ſecurity of the skill and integrity of thoſe to whom he perfectly reſigns his underſtanding; this is too great a truſt to be repoſed in humane frailty, and too ſtrong a temptation to others to impoſe upon us; to abuſe our blindneſs, and to make their own ends of our voluntary ignorance and eaſy credulity. This is ſuch

SERM. XXX.

a folly as if a rich man ſhould make his phyſician his heir; which is to tempt him either to deſtroy him or to let him die, for his own intereſt. So he that truſts the care of his ſoul with other men, and at the ſame time by irrecoverable deed ſettles his underſtanding upon them, lays too great a temptation before them to ſeduce and damn him for their own ends.

And now to reflect a little upon ourſelves. What cauſe have we to bleſs GOD who are ſo happily reſcued from that more than Egyptian darkneſs and bondage, wherein this nation was detained for ſeveral ages! who are delivered out of the hands of thoſe cruel task-maſters, who required brick without ſtraw; that men ſhould be religious without competent underſtanding, and work out their own ſalvation while they denied them the means of all others the moſt neceſſary to it; who are ſo uncharitable as to allow us no ſalvation out of their church, and yet ſo unreaſonable as to deny us the very beſt means of ſalvation when we are in it.

Our forefathers thought it a mighty privilege to have the word of GOD reſtored to them, and the publick prayers and ſervice of GOD celebrated in a known tongue. Let us uſe this ineſtimable privilege with great modeſty and humility; not to the nouriſhing of pride and ſelf-conceit, of diviſion and faction; but, as the apoſtle exhorts, "Let the word "of GOD dwell richly in you, in all wiſdom; "and let the peace of GOD rule in your hearts, "unto which ye are called in one body; and be ye "thankful."

It concerns us mightily (with which admonition I ſhall conclude) both for the honour and ſupport of our

our religion, to be at better union among ourſelves, and not to divide about leſſer things; and ſo to demean ourſelves, as to take from our adverſaries all thoſe pretences whereby they would juſtify themſelves, or at leaſt extenuate the guilt of that heavy charge, which falls every whit as juſtly upon them as ever it did upon the ſcribes and phariſees, "of taking away "the key of knowledge, and ſhutting the kingdom "of heaven againſt men; neither going in themſelves, nor ſuffering thoſe that are entring to "go in."

SERMON XXXI.

The parable of the ten virgins.

Preached before her royal highneſs the princeſs *Anne* of *Denmark* at *Tunbridge-Wells*, *September* 2, 1688.

MATTHEW xxv. 1, 2, &c.

Then ſhall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

And five of them were wiſe, and five were fooliſh, &c.

MY deſign at preſent is to explain this parable, and to make ſuch obſervations upon it as ſeem moſt naturally and without ſqueezing the parable to ſpring from it: and then to make ſome application of it to ourſelves. SERM. XXXI.

"Then

SERM. XXXI. "Then ſhall the kingdom of heaven be likened "unto ten virgins:" by the kingdom of heaven is meant the ſtate and condition of things under the goſpel; by the ten virgins, thoſe who embraced the profeſſion of it, which is here repreſented "by their "taking their lamps and going forth to meet the "bridegroom:" in alluſion to the ancient cuſtom of marriages, in which the bridegroom was wont to lead home his bride in the night, by the light of lamps or torches.

But this profeſſion was not in all equally firm and fruitful; and therefore thoſe who perſever'd and continued ſtedfaſt in this profeſſion, notwithſtanding all the temptations and allurements of the world, and all the fierce ſtorms and aſſaults of perſecution to which this profeſſion was expoſed; and being thus firmly rooted in it, did bring forth the fruits of the SPIRIT, and abound in the graces and virtues of a good life, theſe are the wiſe virgins: but thoſe who either deſerted this profeſſion, or did not bring forth fruits anſwerable to it, are the fooliſh virgins.

And that this is the true difference between them will appear, if we conſider how the parable repreſents them, ver. 3, 4. "They that were fooliſh took "their lamps, and took no oil with them: but "the wiſe took oil in their veſſels with their lamps." So that they both took their lamps, and both lighted them, and therefore muſt both be ſuppoſed to have ſome oil in their lamps at firſt, as appears from ver. 8. where "the fooliſh virgins ſaid unto the "wiſe, give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone "out." They had it ſeems ſome oil in their lamps

at

at first, which kept them lighted for a little while, but had taken no care for a future supply. And therefore the difference between the wise and foolish virgins did not, as some have imagin'd, consist in this, that the wise virgins had oil, but the foolish had none; but in this, that the foolish had taken no care for a farther supply, after the oil which was at first put into their lamps was spent, as the wise had done; who besides the oil that was in their lamps, carried likewise a reserve in some other vessel; for a continual supply of the lamp, as there should be occasion; "the wise took oil in their vessels "with their lamps." SERM. XXXI.

Now the meaning of all this is, that they who are represented by the wise virgins had not only embraced the profession of the christian religion, as the foolish virgins also had done, for they both had their lamps lighted; but they likewise persever'd in that profession, and brought forth fruits answerable to it. For by oil in their lamps, and the first lighting of them, which was common to them both, is meant that solemn profession of faith and repentance which all christians make in baptism: by that farther supply of oil, which the wise virgins only took care to provide, is signified our constancy and perseverance in this profession, together with the fruits of the SPIRIT, and the improvement of the grace received in baptism by the practice and exercise of all the graces and virtues of a good life, whereby men are fitted and prepared for death and judgment, which are here represented to us by the coming of the bridegroom.

This

SERM. XXXI.

This being plainly the main ſcope and intention of the parable, I ſhall explain the reſt of it, as there ſhall be occaſion, under the ſeveral obſervations which I ſhall raiſe from the ſeveral parts of it. And they ſhall be theſe:

Firſt, I obſerve the charitable decorum which our bleſſed SAVIOUR keeps in this, as well as in the reſt of his parables; as if he would fain ſuppoſe and hope, that among thoſe who enjoy the goſpel and make profeſſion of it, the number of them that are truly good, is equal to thoſe that are bad. For our bleſſed SAVIOUR here repreſents the whole number of the profeſſors of chriſtianity by ten virgins, the half whereof the parable ſeems to ſuppoſe to be truly and really good, and to perſevere in goodneſs to the end, ver. 1, 2. "Then ſhall the "kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, "which took their lamps, and went forth to meet "the bridegroom: and five of them were wiſe, and "five were fooliſh."

Secondly, I obſerve how very common it is for men to neglect this great concernment of their ſouls, viz. a due preparation for another world; and how willing men are to deceive themſelves herein, and to depend upon any thing elſe, how groundleſs and unreaſonable ſoever, rather than to take pains to be really good and fit for heaven. And this is in a very lively manner repreſented to us in the deſcription of the fooliſh virgins, who had provided no ſupply of oil in their veſſels, and when the bridegroom was coming would have furniſh'd themſelves by borrowing or buying of others, ver. 8, 9, 10.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, I obſerve, that even the better ſort of chriſtians are not careful and watchful as they ought to prepare themſelves for death and judgment: "whilſt the bridegroom tarried, they all ſlumbered "and ſlept;" even the wiſe virgins as well as the fooliſh.

Fourthly, I obſerve farther, how little is to be done by us, to any good purpoſe, in this great work of preparation, when it is deferred and put off to the laſt. Thus the fooliſh virgins did, and what a ſad confuſion and hurry they were in we may ſee ver. 6, 7, 8, 9. "And at midnight there was a cry "made, behold! the bridegroom cometh; go ye "out to meet him." At midnight; the moſt diſmal and unſeaſonable time of all other: "then all "thoſe virgins aroſe, and trimmed their lamps: "and the fooliſh ſaid unto the wiſe, give us of "your oil for our lamps are gone out: but the wiſe "anſwered, not ſo; leſt there be not enough for us "and you; but go ye rather to them that ſell, and "buy for your ſelves." And how ineffectual all that they could do at that time prov'd to be, we find, ver. 10, 11, 12; "And whilſt they went to "buy, the bridegroom came, and they that were "ready went in with him to the marriage, and the "door was ſhut. Afterwards came alſo the other "virgins, ſaying, LORD, LORD, open to us: but "he anſwered and ſaid, verily I ſay unto you, I "know you not."

Fifthly, I obſerve that there is no ſuch thing as works of ſupererogation, that no man can do more than needs, and is his duty to do, by way of preparation for another world. For when the fooliſh virgins

7.

SERM. XXX. gins would have begg'd of the wife fome oil for their lamps, " the wife anfwered, not fo ; leſt there " be not enough for us and you." It was only the fooliſh virgins that had entertained this fooliſh conceit, that there might be an overplus of grace and merit in others ſufficient to ſupply their want: but the wiſe knew not of any that they had to ſpare, but ſuppos'd all that they had little enough to qualify them for the reward of eternal life ; " not ſo," ſay they, μήποτε, " leſt at any time," leſt when there ſhould be need and occaſion, all that we have done, or could do, ſhould prove little enough for our ſelves.

Sixthly and laſtly, I obſerve, that if we could ſuppoſe any perſons to be ſo over-good, as to have more grace and goodneſs than needs to qualify them for the reward of eternal life, yet there is no aſſigning and transferring of this overplus of grace and virtue from one man to another. For we ſee, ver. 9, 10. that all the ways which they could think of, of borrowing or buying oil of others, did all prove ineffectual ; becauſe the thing is in its own nature impracticable, that one ſinner ſhould be in a condition to merit for another.

All theſe obſervations ſeem to have ſome fair and probable foundation in ſome part or other of this parable ; and moſt of them, I am ſure, are agreeable to the main ſcope and intention of the whole. I ſhall ſpeak to them ſeverally, and as briefly as I can.

Firſt, I obſerve the charitable decorum, which our bleſſed SAVIOUR keeps in this, as well as in the reſt of his parables ; as if he would fain ſuppoſe and hope, that

that among those who enjoy the gospel, and make profession of it, the number of those who make a firm and sincere profession of it, and persevere in goodness to the end, is equal to the number of those who do not make good their profession, or who fall off from it.

I shall not be long upon this, because I lay the least stress upon it, of all the rest. I shall only take notice that our blessed SAVIOUR in this parable represents the whole number of the professors of christianity by ten virgins, the half of which the parable seems to suppose to have sincerely embraced the christian profession, and to have persevered therein to the last: "The kingdom of heaven shall be "likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, "and went forth to meet the bridegroom: and five "of them were wise, and five were foolish."

And this decorum our blessed SAVIOUR seems carefully to observe in his other parables: as in the parable of the prodigal, Luke xv. where for one son that left his father, and took riotous courses, there was another that stayed always with him, and continued constant to his duty. And in the parable of the ten talents, which immediately follows that of the ten virgins, two are supposed to improve the talents committed to them, for one that made no improvement of his. He that had five talents committed to him made them five more, and he that had two gained other two; and only he that but one talent, hid it in the earth, and made no improvement of it. And in the parable which I am now upon, the number of the professors of christianity, who took care to fit and prepare themselves

SERM. XXXI.

for the coming of the bridegroom, is ſuppoſed equal to the number of thoſe who did not.

And whether this be particularly intended in the parable or not, it may however be thus far inſtructive to us; that we ſhould be ſo far from leſſening the number of true chriſtians, and from confining the church of CHRIST within a narrow compaſs, ſo as to exclude out of its communion the far greateſt part of the profeſſors of chriſtianity; that on the contrary, we ſhould enlarge the kingdom of CHRIST as much as we can, and extend our charity to all churches and chriſtians, of what denomination ſoever, as far as regard to truth and to the foundations of the chriſtian religion, will permit us to believe and hope well of them; and rather be contented to err a little on the favourable and charitable part, than to be miſtaken on the cenſorious and damning ſide.

And for this reaſon perhaps it is, that our bleſſed SAVIOUR thought fit to frame his parables with ſo remarkable a bias to the charitable ſide: partly to inſtruct us to extend our charity towards all chriſtian churches, and profeſſors of the chriſtian religion, and our good hopes concerning them, as far as with reaſon we can: and partly to reprove the uncharitableneſs of the jews, who poſitively excluded all the reſt of mankind, beſides themſelves, from all hopes of ſalvation. An odious temper, which to the infinite ſcandal of the chriſtian name and profeſſion, hath prevail'd upon ſome chriſtians to that notorious degree, as not only to ſhut out all the reform'd part of the weſtern church, almoſt equal in number to themſelves, from all hopes of ſalvation

under

under the notion of hereticks; but likewise to unchurch all the other churches of the christian world, which are of much greater extent and number than themselves, that do not own subjection to the bishop of Rome: and this they do, by declaring it "to be of necessity to salvation for every creature "to be subject to the Roman bishop." And this supremacy of the bishop of Rome over all christian churches, Bellarmine calls the sum of the christian religion. So that the Roman communion is plainly founded in schism, that is, in the most unchristian and uncharitable principle that can be, namely, "that they are the only true church of CHRIST, out "of which none can be saved:" which was the very schism of the Donatists. And in this they are so positive, that the learned men of that church, in their disputes and writings, are much more inclinable to believe the salvation of heathens to be possible, than of any of those christians, whom they are pleas'd to call hereticks. The faith of the church of Rome is certainly none of the best; but of one of the greatest and most essential virtues of the christian religion, I mean charity, I doubt they have the least share of any christian church this day in the world. SERM. XXXI.

Secondly, I observe, not from any particular circumstance, but from the main scope and design of this parable, how very apt a great part of christians are to neglect this great concernment of their souls, viz. a careful and due preparation for another world; and how willing they are to deceive themselves in this matter, and to depend upon any thing else, how groundless and unreasonable soever, rather than to take

SERM. XXXI.

take the pains to be really good and fit for heaven. And this is in a very lively manner repreſented to us in the deſcription of the fooliſh virgins, who had provided no ſupply of oil in their veſſels, and when the bridegroom was coming would have furniſh'd themſelves by borrowing or buying of others, ver. 8, 9, 10. They contented themſelves, with having their lamps lighted at their firſt ſetting out to meet the bridegroom, that is, with their being admitted into the profeſſion of chriſtianity by baptiſm, but either were not ſtedfaſt in this profeſſion, or were not careful to adorn it with the graces and virtues of a good life.

And the true reaſon why men are ſo very apt to deceive themſelves in this matter, and are ſo hardly brought to thoſe things wherein religion mainly conſiſts, I mean the fruits of the ſpirit and the practice of real goodneſs; I ſay, the true reaſon of this is, becauſe they are extremely deſirous to reconcile, if it were poſſible, the hopes of eternal happineſs in another world with a liberty to live as they liſt in this preſent world: they are loth to be at the trouble and drudgery of mortifying their luſts, and governing their paſſions, and bridling their tongues, and practiſing all thoſe duties which are comprehended in thoſe two great commandments of the love of God and of our neighbour: they would fain gain the favour of God, and make their calling and election ſure, by ſome eaſier way than by giving all diligence to add to their faith and knowledge the graces and virtues of a good life.

For the plain truth of the matter is, men had rather that religion ſhould be any thing than what indeed it is,

is, viz. the thwarting and croſſing of their vicious inclinations, the curing of their evil and corrupt affections, the due care and government of their unruly appetites and paſſions, their ſincere endeavour and the conſtant practice of all holineſs and virtue in their lives: and therefore they had much rather have ſomething that might handſomly palliate and excuſe their evil inclinations and practices, than to be obliged to retrench and renounce them; and rather than amend and reform their wicked lives, they would be contented to make an honourable amends and compenſation to almighty GOD in ſome other way.

This hath been the way and folly of mankind in all ages, to defeat the great end and deſign of religion, and to thruſt it by, by ſubſtituting ſomething elſe in the place of it; which, as they think, may ſerve the turn as well, having the appearance of as much devotion and reſpect towards GOD, and really coſting them more money and pains, than that which GOD requires of them. Men have ever been apt thus to impoſe upon themſelves, and to pleaſe themſelves with a conceit of pleaſing GOD full as well, or better, by ſome other way than that which he hath preſcribed and appointed for them.

By this means, and upon this falſe principle, religion hath ever been apt to degenerate both among jews and chriſtians, into external and little obſervances, and into a great zeal for leſſer things, with a total neglect of the greater and weightier matters of religion; and, in a word, into infinite ſuperſtitions of one kind or other, and an arrogant conceit of the extraordinary righteouſneſs and merit of theſe things:

SERM. XXXI.

things: in which ſome have proceeded to that height, as if they could drive a ſtrict bargain with GOD for eternal life and happineſs; and have treated him in ſo inſolent a manner, by their doctrine of the merit of their devotions and good works, as if GOD were as much beholden to them for their ſervice and obedience, as they are to him for the reward of them; which they are not afraid to ſay they may challenge at GOD's hand as of right and juſtice belonging to them.

Nay, ſo far have they carried this doctrine in the church of Rome, as not only to pretend to merit eternal life for themſelves, but likewiſe to do a great deal more for the benefit and advantage of others who have not righteouſneſs and goodneſs enough of their own: which was the ſilly conceit of the fooliſh virgins here in the parable, as I ſhall have occaſion to ſhew more fully by and by.

And it is no great wonder that ſuch eaſy ways of religion and pleaſing GOD are very grateful to the corrupt nature of man, and that men who are reſolv'd to continue in an evil courſe are glad to be of a church which will aſſure ſalvation to men upon ſuch terms: the great difficulty is, for men to believe that things which are ſo apparently abſurd and unreaſonable can be true; and to perſuade themſelves that they can impoſe upon GOD by ſuch pretences of ſervice and obedience, as no wiſe prince or father upon earth is to be deluded withal by his ſubjects or children. We ought to have worthier thoughts of GOD, and to conſider that he is a great KING, and will be obeyed and ſerved by his creatures in his own way, and make them happy upon his own terms: and

that

that obedience to what he commands, is better and more acceptable to him, than any other ſacrifice that we can offer, which he hath not required at our hands: and likewiſe, that he is infinitely wiſe and good; and therefore that the laws, which he hath given us to live by, are much more likely and certain means of our happineſs, than any inventions and devices of our own.

Thirdly, I obſerve, that even the better and more conſiderate ſort of chriſtians are not ſo careful and watchful as they ought, to prepare themſelves for death and judgment; "whilſt the bridegroom tar-"ried, they all ſlumbered and ſlept." Even the diſciples of our SAVIOUR, whilſt he was yet perſonally preſent with them, and after a particular charge given them from his own mouth, "Watch and "pray, leſt ye enter into temptation;" yet did not keep that guard upon themſelves as to watch with him for one hour: "In many things, ſays St. James, "we offend all;" even the beſt of us: and who is there that doth not, ſome time or other, remit of his vigilancy and care, ſo as to give the devil an advantage and to lie open to temptation, for want of a continual guard upon himſelf? But then the difference between the wiſe and fooliſh virgins was this, that though they both ſlept, yet the wiſe did not let their lamps go out; they neither quitted their profeſſion, nor did they extinguiſh it by a bad life: and though when the bridegroom came ſuddenly upon them, they were not ſo actually prepar'd to meet him by a continual vigilancy, yet they were habitually prepar'd by the good diſpoſition of their minds, and the general courſe of a holy life. Their lamps might

SERM. XXXI.

burn dim for want of continual trimming, but they had oil in their veſſels to ſupply their lamps, which the fooliſh virgins had taken no care to provide. But ſurely the greateſt wiſdom of all is to maintain a continual watchfulneſs, that ſo we may not be ſurpriz'd by the coming of the bridegroom, and be in a confuſion when death or judgment ſhall overtake us. And bleſſed are thoſe ſervants, and wiſe indeed, whoſe lamps always burn bright, and whom the bridegroom, when he comes, ſhall find watching, and in a fit poſture and preparation to meet him.

Fourthly, I obſerve likewiſe, how little is to be done by us, to any good purpoſe, in this great work of preparation, when it is deferr'd and put off to the laſt. And thus the fooliſh virgins did: but what a ſad confuſion and hurry they were in at the ſudden coming of the bridegroom, when they were not only aſleep, but when after they were awaken'd, they found themſelves altogether unprovided of that which was neceſſary to trim their lamps, and to put them in a poſture to meet the bridegroom: when they wanted that which was neceſſary at that very inſtant, but could not be provided in an inſtant: I ſay, what a tumult and confuſion they were in, being thus ſurpriz'd, the parable repreſents to us at large, ver. 6, 7, 8, 9. "and at midnight there was a cry "made, Behold! the bridegroom cometh, go ye "out to meet him. Then all thoſe virgins aroſe "and trimmed their lamps," that is, they went about it as well as they could; "and the fooliſh ſaid "unto the wiſe, give us of your oil, for our lamps "are gone out."

"At

" At midnight there was a cry made," that is, at the moſt diſmal and unſeaſonable time of all other; when they were faſt aſleep, and ſuddenly awaken'd in great terror, when they could not on the ſudden recollect themſelves, and conſider what to do; when the ſummons was ſo very ſhort, that they had neither time to conſider what was fit to be done, nor time to do it in.

And ſuch is the caſe of thoſe who put off their repentance and preparation for another world, 'till they are ſurpriz'd by death and judgment; for it comes all to one in the iſſue, which of them it be. The parable indeed ſeems more particularly to point at our LORD's coming to judgment, but the caſe is much the ſame as to thoſe who are ſurpriz'd by ſudden death; ſuch as gives them but little, or not ſufficient time for ſo great a work: becauſe ſuch as death leaves them, judgment will certainly find them.

And what a miſerable confuſion muſt they needs be in, who are thus ſurpriz'd either by the one or the other? How unfit ſhould we be, if the general judgment of the world ſhould come upon us on the ſudden, to meet that great judge at his coming, if we have made no preparation for it before that time? What ſhall we then be able to do, in that great and univerſal conſternation? " when the SON of man " ſhall appear in the clouds of heaven, with power " and great glory; when the ſun ſhall be darken'd, " and the moon turned into blood, and all the " powers of heaven ſhall be ſhaken:" when all nature ſhall feel ſuch violent pangs and convulſions, and the whole world ſhall be in a cumbuſtion ſa-

SERM. XXXI.

ming and cracking about our ears: " when the " heavens ſhall be ſhrivel'd up as a ſcroll when it is " roll'd together," and the earth ſhall be toſs'd from its center, " and every mountain and iſland ſhall be " removed;" What thoughts can the wiſeſt men then have about them, in the midſt of ſo much noiſe and terror? Or if they could have any, what time will there then be to put them in execution? " when " they ſhall ſee the angel, that ſtandeth upon the " ſea and upon the earth, lifting up his hand to hea- " ven, and ſwearing by him that liveth for ever and " ever, that time ſhall be no longer;" as this dreadful day is deſcribed Rev. x. 5, 6, and chap. vi. 15. where ſinners are repreſented at the appearance of this great judge, not as flying to GOD in hopes of mercy, but as flying from him in utter deſpair of finding mercy with him: " The kings of the earth, and the great " men, and the mighty men, and the rich men, " and the great captains, hid themſelves in the dens, " and in the rocks of the earth; and ſaid to the " mountains and rocks, fall on us and hide us from " the face of him that ſitteth on the throne, and " from the wrath of the lamb: for the great day of " his wrath is come; and who ſhall be able to " ſtand?" The biggeſt and the boldeſt ſinners that ever were upon earth, ſhall then flee from the face of him whom they have ſo often blaſphemed and denied; and ſhall ſo far deſpair of finding mercy with him in that day, who would ſue to him for it no ſooner, that they ſhall addreſs themſelves to the mountains and rocks, as being more pitiful and exorable than he; " to hide them from the face of him that ſit- " teth on the throne, and from the wrath of the " lamb:"

" lamb:" from the wrath of the lamb, to signify to us that nothing is more terrible than meekness and patience when they are throughly provok'd and turn'd into fury. SERM. XXXI.

In such dreadful confusion shall all impenitent sinners be, when they shall be surpriz'd by that great and terrible day of the LORD: and the case of a dying sinner, who would take no care in the time of his life and health to make preparation for another world, is not much more hopeful and comfortable.

For alas! how little is it that a sick and dying man can do in such a strait of time? in the midst of so much pain and weakness of body, and of such confusion and amazement of mind. With what heart can he set about so great a work, for which there is so little time? With what face can he apply himself to GOD in this extremity, whom he hath so disdainfully neglected all the days of his life? And how can he have the confidence to hope, that GOD will hear his cries, and regard his tears, that are forc'd from him in this day of his necessity? when he is conscious to himself, that in that long day of GOD's grace and patience he turned a deaf ear to all his merciful invitations, " and rejected the " counsel of GOD against himself." In a word, how can he " who would not know, in that his " day, the things which belonged to his peace," expect any other but that they should now be for ever hid from his eyes, which are ready to be clos'd in utter darkness?

I will not pronounce any thing concerning the impossibility of a death-bed repentance: but I am sure that

SERM. XXXI.

that it is very difficult, and I believe very rare. We have but one example, that I know of, in the whole bible, of the repentance of a dying ſinner; I mean that of the penitent thief upon the croſs: and the circumſtances of his caſe are ſo peculiar and extraordinary, that I cannot ſee that it affords any ground of hope and encouragement to men in ordinary caſes. We are not like to ſuffer in the company of the SON of GOD, and of the SAVIOUR of the world; and if we could do ſo, it is not certain that we ſhould behave ourſelves towards him ſo well as the penitent thief did, and make ſo very good an end of ſo very bad a life.

And the parable in the text is ſo far from giving any encouragement to a death-bed repentance and preparation, that it rather repreſents their caſe as deſperate who put off their preparation to that time. How ineffectual all that the fooliſh virgins could do at that time did in the concluſion prove, is ſet forth to us at large in the parable; they wanted oil, but could neither borrow nor buy it: they would then fain have had it, and ran about to get it; but it was not to be obtain'd neither by intreaty, nor for money: firſt they apply themſelves to the wiſe virgins, for a ſhare in the overplus of their graces and virtues: "the fooliſh ſaid unto the wiſe, give us of "your oil, for our lamps are gone out; but the "wiſe anſwered, not ſo; leſt there be not enough "for us and you:" The wiſe virgins, it ſeems, knew of none they had to ſpare: and then they are repreſented ironically, ſending the fooliſh virgins to ſome famous market where this oil was pretended to be ſold; "go ye rather to them that ſell, and buy

Ver. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

Ver. 8.

Ver. 9.

"for

" for yourſelves:" and as dying and deſperate perſons are apt to catch at every twig, and when they can ſee no hopes of being ſaved, are apt to believe every one that will give them any; ſo theſe fooliſh virgins follow the advice; " and whilſt they went to Ver. 10.
" buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were
" ready went in with him to the marriage, and the
" door was ſhut; and afterwards came alſo the other
" virgins, ſaying, LORD, LORD, open to us; but
" he anſwered and ſaid, verily I ſay unto you, I
" know you not." SERM. XXXI.

You ſee how little, or rather no encouragement at all there is from any the leaſt circumſtance in this parable, for thoſe who have delay'd their preparation for another world 'till they be overtaken by death or judgment, to hope by any thing that they can do, by any importunity which they can then uſe, to gain admiſſion into heaven. Let thoſe conſider this with fear and trembling, who forget GOD and neglect religion all their life-time, and yet feed themſelves with vain hopes by ſome device or other to be admitted into heaven at laſt.

Fifthly, I obſerve that there is no ſuch thing as works of ſupererogation, that is, that no man can do more than needs, and than is his duty to do, by way of preparation for another world. For when Ver. 8.
the fooliſh virgins would have begg'd of the wiſe ſome oil for their lamps, " the wiſe anſwered, not Ver. 9.
" ſo; leſt there be not enough for us and you:" It was only the fooliſh virgins that in the time of their extremity, and when they were conſcious that they wanted that which was abſolutely neceſſary to qualify them for admiſſion into heaven, who had entertain'd this

SERM. XXXI.

this idle conceit, that there might be an overplus of grace and merit in others ſufficient to ſupply their want: but the wiſe knew not of any they had to ſpare, but ſuppoſed all that they had done, or could poſſibly do, to be little enough to qualify them for the glorious reward of eternal life: "not ſo, ſay "they, μήποτε, leſt at any time," that is, leſt when there ſhould be need and occaſion, all that we have done, or could do, ſhould be little enough for our ſelves: and in this point they had been plainly inſtructed by the bridegroom himſelf, "But ye, "when ye have done all, ſay we are unprofitable "ſervants, and have done nothing but what was our "duty to do."

And yet this conceit of the fooliſh virgins, as abſurd as it is, hath been taken up in good earneſt by a grave matron, who gives out her ſelf to be the mother and miſtreſs of all churches, and the only infallible oracle of truth, I mean the church of Rome, whoſe avowed doctrine it is, that there are ſome perſons ſo excellently good that they may do more than needs for their own ſalvation: and therefore when they have done as much for themſelves as in ſtrict duty they are bound to do, and thereby have paid down a full and valuable conſideration for heaven, and as much as in equal juſtice between God and man it is worth; that then they may go to work again for their friends, and begin a new ſcore; and from that time forwards may put the ſurpluſage of their good works as a debt upon God, to be laid up in the publick treaſury of the church, as ſo many bills of credit, which the pope by his pardons and indulgences may diſpenſe, and place to whoſe account

account he pleaſes: and out of this bank, which is kept at Rome, thoſe who never took care to have any righteouſneſs of their own, may be ſupplied at reaſonable rates. SERM. XXXI.

To which they have added a further ſupply of grace, if there ſhould be any need of it, by the ſacrament of extreme unction, never heard of in the chriſtian church for many ages; but deviſed, as it were on purpoſe, to furniſh ſuch fooliſh virgins with oil, as are here deſcribed in the parable.

And thus by one device or other they have enervated the chriſtian religion to that degree, that it hath almoſt quite loſt its true virtue and efficacy upon the hearts and lives of men: and, inſtead of the real fruits of goodneſs and righteouſneſs, it produceth little elſe but ſuperſtition and folly; or if it produce any real virtues, yet even the virtue of thoſe virtues is in a great meaſure ſpoiled by their arrogant pretences of merit and ſupererogation, and is render'd inſignificant to themſelves by their inſolent carriage and behaviour towards GOD.

Sixthly and laſtly, if we could ſuppoſe any perſons to be ſo overgrown with goodneſs, as to have more than needs to qualify them for the reward of eternal life; yet there can be no aſſigning and transferring of this overplus of grace and virtue from one man to another. For we ſee that all the ways that could be thought on of begging, or borrowing, or buying oil of others, did all prove ineffectual; becauſe the thing is in its own nature impracticable, that one ſinner, who owes all that he hath, and much more, to GOD, ſhould have any thing to ſpare wherewithal to merit for another.

7.

SERM. XXXI.

Indeed our bleſſed SAVIOUR hath merited for us all the reward of eternal life, upon the condition of faith and repentance and obedience: but the infinite merit of his obedience and ſufferings will be of no benefit and advantage to us, if we our ſelves be not really and inherently righteous. So St. John tells us, and warns us to beware of the contrary conceit, "Little children, let no man deceive you, he "that doth righteouſneſs is righteous, even as he is "righteous."

If we do ſincerely endeavour to pleaſe GOD, and to keep his commandments in the general courſe of a holy and virtuous life, the merit of CHRIST's perfect obedience and ſufferings will be available with GOD for the acceptance of our ſincere though but imperfect obedience. But if we take no care to be righteous and good our ſelves, the perfect righteouſneſs of CHRIST will do us no good; much leſs the imperfect righteouſneſs of any other man who is a ſinner himſelf. And the holieſt man that ever was upon earth, can no more aſſign and make over his righteouſneſs, or repentance, or any part of either, to another that wants it, than a man can bequeath his wiſdom or learning to his heir or his friend: no more than a ſick man can be reſtored to health by virtue of the phyſick which another man hath taken.

Let no man therefore think of being good by a deputy, that cannot be contented to be happy, and to be ſaved the ſame way, that is, to go to hell, and to be tormented there in perſon, to or go to heaven, and be admitted into that place of bliſs only by proxy. So that theſe good works with a hard name,

name, and the making over the merit of them to others, have no manner of foundation either in scripture or reason, but are all mere fancy and fiction in divinity.

The inference from all this shall be the application which our SAVIOUR makes of this parable, "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor "the hour wherein the SON of man cometh;" as Ver. 13. if he had said, the design of this parable is to instruct us that we ought to be continually vigilant, and always upon our guard, and in a constant readiness and preparation to meet the bridegroom; because we know not the time of his coming to judgment, nor yet, which will be of the same consequence and concernment to us, do any of us know the precise time of our own death. Either of these may happen at any time, and come when we least expect them. And therefore we should make the best and speediest provision that we can for another world, and should be continually upon our watch, and trimming our lamps, that we may not be surprised by either of these; neither by our own particular death, nor by the general judgment of the world: "Because the SON of man will come in a day when "we look not for him, and at an hour when we are "not aware."

More particularly, we should take up a present and effectual resolution not to delay our repentance, and the reformation of our lives, that we may not have that great work to do when we are not fit to do any thing; no not to dispose of our temporal concernments, much less to prepare for eternity, and to do that in a few moments, which ought to have been

SERM. XXXI.

the care and endeavour of our whole lives: that we may not be forced to huddle up an imperfect, and I fear an insignificant repentance; and to do that in great haste and confusion, which certainly does require our wisest and most deliberate thoughts, and all the consideration in the world.

And we should provide store of oil in our vessels, wherewith to supply our lamps, that they may burn bright to the last; I mean, we should improve the grace which we receive in baptism, by abounding in the fruits of the SPIRIT, and in all the substantial virtues of a good life; "that so an entrance "may be ministred to us abundantly into the "everlasting kingdom of our LORD and SAVIOUR "JESUS CHRIST."

By this means, when we are called to meet the bridegroom, we shall not be put to those miserable and sharking shifts which the foolish virgins were driven to, of begging, or borrowing, or buying oil; which will all fail us, when we come to depend upon them: and though the dying man may make a hard shift to support himself with these false comforts for a little while, yet when the short delusion is over, which will be as soon as ever he is step'd into the other world, he will to his everlasting confusion and trouble find the door of heaven shut against him; and that notwithstanding all his vast treasure of pardons and indulgences, which have cost him so much, and are worth so little, "he shall never see the kingdom "of GOD."

And lastly, we should take great care that we do not extinguish our lamps by quitting the profession of our holy religion upon any temptation of advantage,

tage, or for fear of any loſs or ſuffering whatſoever. This occaſion will call for all our faith and patience, all our courage and conſtancy,

Nunc animis opus, Æneа, nunc pectore firmo.

When it comes to this trial, we had need " to gird " up the loins of our minds," to ſummon all our forces, and " to put on the whole armour of GOD, " that we may be able to ſtand faſt in an evil day, " and when we have done all to ſtand."

And now, my brethren, to uſe the words of St. Peter, " I teſtify unto you, that this is the true " grace of GOD wherein ye ſtand." The proteſtant reformed religion, which we in this nation profeſs, is the very goſpel of CHRIST, the true ancient chriſtianity. 1 Pet. v. 12.

And, for GOD's ſake, ſince in this hour of temptation, when our religion is in ſo apparent hazard, we pretend to love it to that degree, as to be contented to part with any thing for it, let us reſolve to practiſe it; and to teſtify our love to it, in the ſame way that our SAVIOUR would have us ſhew our love to him, by keeping his commandments.

I will conclude all with the apoſtle's exhortation, ſo very proper for this purpoſe, and to this preſent time, " Only let your converſation be as it be- " cometh the goſpel of CHRIST," that is, chiefly and above all take care to lead lives ſuitable to the chriſtian religion: and then, as it follows, " ſtand " faſt in one ſpirit, with one mind, ſtriving toge- " ther for the faith of the goſpel; and in nothing " terrified by your adverſaries, which to them is an " evident token of perdition, but to you of ſalvati- " on, and that of GOD." Philip. i. 27.

Now

SERM. XXXI.

" Now unto him that is able to ſtabliſh you in " the goſpel, and to keep you from falling; and to " preſent you faultleſs before the preſence of his " glory with exceeding joy: to the only wiſe GOD " our SAVIOUR, be glory and majeſty, dominion " and power, both now and ever." Amen.

A

THANKSGIVING SERMON

FOR OUR

DELIVERANCE

BY THE

PRINCE of *ORANGE.*

Preached at *Lincoln's-Inn* Chapel,
January 31, 1688.

To the worſhipful the

MASTERS of the BENCH,

And the reſt of the

GENTLEMEN

OF THE

Honourable Society of *Lincoln's-Inn.*

THOUGH I was at firſt very unwilling to expoſe to the publick a ſermon *made upon ſo little warning, and ſo great an* occaſion; *yet upon ſecond thoughts I could not think it fit to reſiſt the unanimous and earneſt requeſt of ſo many worthy perſons, as the* Maſters *of the* Bench *of this* honourable ſociety; *to whom I ſtand ſo much indebted for your great and continued reſpects to me, and kind*

7.

acceptance of my labours among you for now above the ſpace of five and twenty years. In a moſt grateful acknowledgment whereof, this diſcourſe, ſuch as it is, in mere obedience to your commands, is now humbly preſented to you, by

Your moſt obliged and

Feb. 28. $168\frac{8}{9}$.

faithful Servant,

JOHN TILLOTSON.

SERMON XXXII.

EZRA ix. 13, 14.

And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great treſpaſs; ſeeing that thou our GOD *haſt puniſhed us leſs than our iniquities deſerve, and haſt given us ſuch a deliverance as this:*

Should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of theſe abominations? wouldſt not thou be angry with us 'till thou haſt conſumed us, ſo that there ſhould be no remnant nor eſcaping?

SERM. XXXII.

I AM ſufficiently aware that the particular occaſion of theſe words is, in ſeveral reſpects, very different from the occaſion of this day's ſolemnity: for theſe words were ſpoken by Ezra at a time appointed for publick and ſolemn humiliation. But I ſhall not now conſider them in that relation, but rather as they refer to the great deliverance which GOD had ſo lately wrought for them; and as they are a caution to take heed of abuſing great mercies received from GOD; and ſo they are very proper and pertinent to the great occaſion of this day. Nay, theſe words even in their ſaddeſt aſpect, are not ſo unſuitable to it. For we find in ſcripture upon the moſt ſolemn occaſions of humiliation, that good men have always teſtified a thankful ſenſe of the goodneſs of GOD to them. And indeed the mercy of GOD doth then appear above meaſure merciful, when the ſinner is moſt deeply ſenſible of his own vileneſs and

SERM. XXXII.

unworthiness. And so Ezra here, in the depth of their sorrow and humiliation, hath so great a sense of the greatness of their deliverance, that he hardly knew how to express it; "And hast given us "such a deliverance as this." And on the other hand, we find that good men, in their most solemn praises and thanksgivings, have made very serious reflexions upon their own unworthiness. And surely the best way to make men truly thankful, is first to make them very humble. When David makes his most solemn acknowledgments to GOD for his great mercies to him, how doth he abase himself before him; "but who am I, and what is my people?" And so likewise, after he had summoned all the powers and faculties of his soul to join in the praises of GOD, he interposeth this seasonable meditation, "He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor re-"warded us according to our iniquities." The greater and more lively sense we have of the goodness of GOD to us, the more we shall abhor ourselves in dust and ashes; nothing being more apt to melt us into tears of repentance, than the consideration of great and undeserved mercies vouchsafed to us. The goodness of GOD doth naturally lead to repentance.

1 Chron. xxix. 4.

Psal. ciii. 10.

Having thus reconciled the text to the present occasion, I shall for the more distinct handling of the words take notice of these two parts in them.

First, here is a case supposed; should we, "after "all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and "since GOD hath punished us less than our iniquities "deserve, and hath given us such a deliverance as "this; should we again break his commandments?

Secondly,

SERM. XXXII.

Secondly, here is a ſentence and determination in the caſe; "Wouldſt thou not be angry with us 'till "thou hadſt conſum'd us, ſo that there ſhould be no "remnant nor eſcaping?" This is not ſpoken doubtfully, though it be put by way of queſtion; but is the more vehemently poſitive, the more peremptorily affirmative; as if he had ſaid, it cannot otherwiſe be in reaſon expected, but that after ſuch repeated provocations "GOD ſhould be angry with us 'till he "had conſumed us."

Firſt, here is a caſe ſuppoſed; ſhould we, "after "all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for "our great treſpaſs; and ſince GOD hath puniſhed "us leſs than our iniquities deſerve, and hath given "us ſuch a deliverance as this: ſhould we again "break his commandments, and join affinity with "the people of theſe abominations?" In which words theſe following propoſitions ſeem to be involv'd, which I ſhall but juſt mention, and paſs to the ſecond part of the text.

1. That ſin is the cauſe of all our ſufferings, "after "all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and "for our great treſpaſs." Our evil deeds bring all other evils upon us.

2. That great ſins have uſually a proportionable puniſhment; "after all that is come upon us," there is the greatneſs of our puniſhment; "for our evil deeds, "and for our great treſpaſs," there is the greatneſs of our ſin. But when I ſay that great ſins have a proportionable puniſhment, I do not mean that any temporal puniſhments are proportionable to the great evil of ſin; but that GOD doth uſually obſerve a proportion in the temporal puniſhments of ſin, ſo that

SERM. XXXII. that although no temporal puniſhment be proportionable to ſin, yet the temporal puniſhment of one ſin holds a proportion to the puniſhment of another; and conſequently, leſſer and greater ſins have proportionably a leſſer and greater puniſhment.

3. That all the puniſhments which GOD inflicts in this life do fall ſhort of the demerit of our ſins; and "ſeeing that thou our GOD haſt puniſh'd us leſs than "our iniquities deſerve." In the Hebrew it is, "and "haſt kept down our iniquities," that is, that they ſhould not riſe up againſt us. The LXX. expreſſeth it very emphatically, "thou haſt eaſed us of our "ſins," that is, thou haſt not let the whole weight of them fall upon us. Were it not for the reſtraints which GOD puts upon his anger, and the merciful mitigations of it, the ſinner would not be able to bear it, but muſt ſink under it. Indeed it is only ſaid in the Text, that the puniſhment which GOD inflicted upon the jews, though it was a long captivity, was beneath the deſert of their ſins: but yet it is univerſally true, and Ezra perhaps might intend to inſinuate ſo much, that all temporal puniſhments, though never ſo ſevere, are always leſs than our inquities deſerve.

4. That GOD many times works very great deliverances for thoſe who are very unworthy of them; "and haſt given us ſuch a deliverance as this, not-"withſtanding our evil deeds, and notwithſtanding "our great treſpaſs."

5. That we are but too apt, even after great judgments, and after great mercies, to relapſe into our former ſins; "ſhould we again break thy command-"ments." Ezra inſinuates that there was great reaſon

ſon to fear this, eſpecially conſidering the ſtrange temper of that people, who when GOD multiply'd his bleſſings upon them, were ſo apt to "wax fat "and kick againſt him;" and though he had caſt them ſeveral times into the furnace of affliction, though they were melted for the preſent, yet they were many times but the harder for it afterwards. SERM. XXXII.

6. That it is good to take notice of thoſe particular ſins which have brought the judgments of GOD upon us. So Ezra does here; "after all that is come "upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great "treſpaſs; and, ſhould we again join in affinity "with the people of theſe abominations?"

Secondly, here is a ſentence and determination in the caſe; "wouldſt thou not be angry with us 'till "thou hadſt conſumed us, ſo that there ſhould be no "remnant nor eſcaping?" Which queſtion, as I ſaid before, doth imply a ſtrong and peremptory affirmative; as if he had ſaid, after ſuch a provocation there is great reaſon to conclude that GOD would be angry with us 'till he had conſumed us.

From whence the obſervation contained in this part of the text will be this, "That it is a fearful "aggravation of ſin, and a ſad preſage of ruin to a "people, after great judgments and great delive-"rances, to return to ſin, and eſpecially to the ſame "ſins again." Hear how paſſionately Ezra expreſſes himſelf in this caſe, ver. 6. "I am aſhamed, O my "GOD, and bluſh to lift up mine eyes to thee, my "GOD." Why? what was the cauſe of this great ſhame and confuſion of face? He tells us, ver. 9. "for we were bondmen, yet our GOD hath not for-"ſaken us in our bondage, but hath extended his "mercy

SERM. XXXII.

" mercy to us, to give us a reviving, to ſet up the " houſe of our GOD, and to repair the deſolations " thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in " Jeruſalem;" that is, to reſtore them the free and ſafe exerciſe of their religion. Here was great mercy and a mighty deliverance indeed; and yet after this they preſently relapſed into a very great ſin, ver. 10. " And now, O our GOD, what ſhall we ſay after " this? for we have forſaken thy commandments."

In handling of this obſervation, I ſhall do theſe two things.

Firſt, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew that this is a very heavy aggravation of ſin, and

Secondly, that it is a fatal preſage of ruin to a people.

Firſt, it is a heavy aggravation of ſin after great judgments, and after ſignal mercies and deliverances to return to ſin, and eſpecially to the ſame ſins again. Here are three things to be diſtinctly ſpoken to.

1. That it is a great aggravation of ſin to return to it after great judgments.

2. To do this after great mercies and deliverances.

3. After both to return to the ſame ſins again.

1. It is a great aggravation of ſin after great judgments have been upon us to return to an evil courſe: becauſe this is an argument of great obſtinacy in evil. The longer Pharaoh reſiſted the judgments of GOD, the more was his wicked heart hardned, 'till at laſt he arrived at a monſtrous degree of hardneſs, having been, as the text tells us, hardned under ten plagues. And we find, that after GOD had threaten'd the people of Iſrael with ſeveral judgments, he tells them, that if they " will not be reformed by all

Lev. xxvi. 23.

" theſe

SERM. XXXII.

" theſe things, he will puniſh them ſeven times " more for their ſins." And if the juſt GOD will in ſuch a caſe puniſh ſeven times more, we may conclude that the ſin is ſeven times greater.

What ſad complaints doth the prophet make of the people of Iſrael growing worſe for judgments. " Ah! ſinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, Iſaiah i. 4. " children that have been corrupters, a ſeed of evil " doers." He can hardly find words enough to expreſs how great ſinners they were; and he adds the reaſon in the next verſe, " Why ſhould they be ſmit- Ver. 5. " ten any more? they will revolt more and more." They were but the worſe for judgments. This renders them " a ſinful nation, a people laden with ini- " quity." And again, " The people turneth not Iſaiah ix. " to him that ſmiteth them, neither do they ſeek 13. " the LORD of hoſts; therefore his anger is not " turned away, but his hand is ſtretched out ſtill." And the ſame prophet further complains to the ſame purpoſe, " When thy hand is lifted up, they will not Iſaiah " ſee." There is a particular brand ſet upon king xxvi. 11. Ahaz, becauſe affliction made him worſe: " This 2 Chron. " is that king Ahaz," that is, that grievous and xxviii. 22. notorious ſinner. And what was it that render'd him ſo? " in the time of his diſtreſs he ſinned yet more " againſt the LORD;" this is that king Ahaz, who is ſaid to have provoked the LORD " above all the " kings of Iſrael which were before him."

2. It is likewiſe a ſore aggravation of ſin, when it is committed after great mercies and deliverances vouchſafed to us. Becauſe this is an argument of great ingratitude. And this we find recorded as a heavy charge upon the people of Iſrael, " that they Judg. viii. " re- 34, 35.

SERM. XXXII.

" remembred not the LORD their GOD, who had " delivered them out of the hand of all their ene- " mies on every ſide; neither ſhewed they kindneſs " to the houſe of Jerubbaal, namely Gideon," who had been their deliverer, " according to all the good- " neſs which he had ſhewed to Iſrael." GOD, we ſee, takes it very ill at our hands, when we are ungrateful to the inſtruments of our deliverance; but much more when we are unthankful to him the author of it. And how ſeverely doth Nathan the prophet reproach David upon this account? " Thus " ſaid the LORD GOD of Iſrael, I anointed thee " king over Iſrael, and delivered thee out of the " hand of Saul, &c. and if this had been too lit- " tle, I would moreover have done ſuch and ſuch " things. Wherefore haſt thou deſpiſed the com- " mandment of the LORD to do evil in his ſight?" GOD here reckons up his manifold mercies and deliverances, and aggravates David's ſin upon this account. And he was very angry likewiſe with Solomon for the ſame reaſon, " becauſe he had turned " from the LORD GOD of Iſrael, who had appear'd " to him twice." However we may ſlight the mercies of GOD, he keeps a punctual and ſtrict account of them. It is particularly noted, as a great blot upon Hezekiah, " that he returned not ac- " cording to the benefits done unto him." GOD takes very ſevere notice of all the unkind and unworthy returns that are made to him for his goodneſs.

1 Kings xi. 9.

2 Chron. xxxii. 25.

Ingratitude to GOD is ſo unnatural and monſtrous, that we find him appealing againſt us for it to the inanimate creatures. " Hear O heavens! " and

Iſaiah i. 2.

SERM. XXXII.

" and give ear O earth! for the LORD hath ſpoken; " I have nouriſhed and brought up children, but " they have rebelled againſt me." And then he goes on and upbraids them with the brute creatures, as being more grateful to men, than men are to GOD. " The ox knoweth his owner, and the aſs " his maſter's crib, but Iſrael doth not know, my " people doth not conſider." And in the ſame prophet there is the like complaint, " Let favour be " ſhewn to the wicked, yet will he not learn righ- " teouſneſs. In the land of uprightneſs will he deal " unjuſtly, and will not behold the majeſty of the " LORD. LORD, when thy hand is lifted up, they " will not ſee; but they ſhall ſee and be aſhamed." They that will not acknowledge the mercies of GOD's providence, ſhall feel the ſtrokes of his juſtice. Iſaiah i. 3. Iſaiah xxvi. 10.

There is no greater evidence in the world of an untractable diſpoſition, than not to be wrought upon by kindneſs, not to be melted by mercies, not to be obliged by benefits, not to be tamed by gentle uſage. Nay, GOD expects that his mercies ſhould lay ſo great an obligation upon us, that even a miracle ſhould not tempt us to be unthankful. " If there " ariſe among you a prophet, ſays Moſes to the " people of Iſrael, or a dreamer of dreams, and " giveth thee a ſign or a wonder, and the ſign or " the wonder cometh to paſs, whereof he ſpake to " thee, ſaying, let us go after other gods and ſerve " them; thou ſhalt not hearken to the words of that " prophet." And he gives the reaſon, " becauſe he " hath ſpoken to turn you away from the LORD GOD " of Iſrael, which brought you out of the land of " Egypt, and delivered you out of the houſe of bon- " dage." Deut. xiii. 1, 2. Ver. 5.

SERM. XXXII.

3. It is a greater aggravation yet, after great mercies and judgments to return to the ſame ſins. Becauſe this can hardly be without our ſinning againſt knowledge, and after we are convinced how evil and bitter the ſin is which we were guilty of, and have been ſo ſorely puniſh'd for before. This is an argument of a very perverſe and incorrigible temper, and that which made the ſin of the people of Iſrael ſo above meaſure ſinful, that after ſo many ſignal deliverances, and ſo many terrible judgments, they fell into the ſame ſin of murmuring ten times; murmuring againſt GOD the author, and againſt Moſes the glorious inſtrument of their deliverance out of Egypt; which was one of the two great types of the old teſtament, both of temporal and ſpiritual oppreſſion and tyranny. Hear with what reſentment GOD ſpeaks of the ill returns which they made to him for that great mercy and deliverance. "Becauſe "all thoſe men which have ſeen my glory, and my "miracles which I did in Egypt, and in the wilder- "neſs, and have tempted me now theſe ten times, "and have not hearkened unto my voice; ſurely "they ſhall not ſee the land which I ſware unto their "fathers." And after he had brought them into the promiſed land, and wrought great deliverances for them ſeveral times, how does he upbraid them with their proneneſs to fall again into the ſame ſin of idolatry? "And the LORD ſaid unto the children of "Iſrael, did not I deliver you from the Egyptians, "and from the Amorites; from the children of "Ammon, and from the Philiſtines? The Zido- "nians alſo and the Amalekites and Maonites did "oppreſs you; and ye cried unto me, and I de-

Numb. xiv. 22.

Judges x. 11, 12, 13, 14.

"livered

" livered you out of their hand: yet you have for- SERM.
" ſaken me, and ſerved other gods; wherefore I XXXII.
" will deliver you no more: go and cry unto the
" gods which ye have choſen, let them deliver you
" in the time of your tribulation." This incenſed GOD ſo highly againſt them, that they ſtill relaps'd into the ſame ſin of idolatry, after ſo many afflictions and ſo many deliverances. Upon ſuch an occaſion well might the prophet ſay, " Thine own Jer. ii. 19.
" wickedneſs ſhall correct thee, and thy ſins ſhall
" reprove thee: know therefore that it is an evil
" and bitter thing that thou haſt forſaken the LORD
" thy GOD." It is hardly poſſible but we ſhould know that the wickedneſs for which we have been ſo ſeverely corrected, is an evil and bitter thing.

Thus much for the firſt part of the obſervation, namely, that it is a fearful aggravation of ſin, after great judgments and great deliverances to return to ſin, and eſpecially to the ſame ſins again. I proceed to the

Second part, namely, that this is a fatal preſage of ruin to a people; " ſhould we again break thy
" commandments, and join in affinity with the peo-
" ple of theſe abominations? wouldſt thou not be
" angry with us till thou hadſt conſumed us, ſo that
" there ſhould be no remnant nor eſcaping?" and ſo GOD threatens the people of Iſrael in the text which I cited before, " wherefore I will deliver you Judges x.
" no more." Wherefore, that is, becauſe they would 13.
neither be reform'd by the afflictions wherewith GOD had exerciſed them, nor by the many wonderful deliverances which he had wrought for them.

And

SERM. XXXII.

And there is great reaſon why GOD ſhould deal thus with a people that continues impenitent both under the judgments and mercies of GOD.

1. Becauſe this doth ripen the ſins of a nation; and it is time for GOD to put in his ſickle when a people are ripe for ruin. When the meaſure of their ſins is full, it is no wonder if the cup of his indignation begin to overflow. It is ſaid of the Amorites, four hundred years before GOD brought that fearful ruin upon them, that GOD deferr'd the extirpation of them, "becauſe the iniquity of the "Amorites was not yet full." When neither the mercies nor the judgments of GOD will bring us to repentance, we are then fit for deſtruction; according to that of the apoſtle, "What if GOD willing "to ſhew his wrath, and make his power known, "endured with much long-ſuffering the veſſels of "wrath fitted for deſtruction?" they who are not wrought upon neither by the patience of GOD's mercies, nor by the patience of his judgments, ſeem to be fitted and prepared, to be ripe and ready for deſtruction.

Gen. xv. 16.

Rom. ix. 22.

2. Becauſe this incorrigible temper ſhews the caſe of ſuch perſons to be deſperate and incurable. "Why ſhould they be ſmitten any more?" ſays GOD of the people of Iſrael, "they will revolt more "and more. How often would I have gathered "you, ſays our bleſſed SAVIOUR to the Jews, even "as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings? "and ye would not! Behold, your houſe is left to "you deſolate," that is, ye ſhall be utterly deſtroyed; as it happen'd forty years after to Jeruſalem, and to the whole jewiſh nation.

Iſaiah i. 5.

Matth. xxiii. 37, 38.

When

When God ſees that all the means which he can uſe do prove ineffectual and to no purpoſe, he will then give over a people, as phyſicians do their patients when they ſee that nature is ſpent, and their caſe paſt remedy. When men will not be the better for the beſt means that heaven can uſe, God will then leave them to reap the fruit of their own doings, and abandon them to the demerit of their ſin. SERM. XXXII.

That which now remains is to apply this to our ſelves, and to the ſolemn occaſion of this day.

And if this be our caſe, let us take heed that this be not alſo our doom and ſentence.

Firſt, the caſe in the text doth very much reſemble ours. And that in three reſpects. God hath ſent great judgments upon us for our evil deeds and for our great treſpaſſes; "he hath puniſhed us leſs "than our iniquities have deſerved:" and hath given us a very great and wonderful deliverance.

1. God hath inflicted great judgments upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great treſpaſſes. Great judgments, both for the quality, and for the continuance of them. It ſhall ſuffice only to mention thoſe which are of a more ancient date. Scarce hath any nation been more calamitous than this of ours, both in reſpect of the invaſions and conqueſts of foreigners, and of our own civil and inteſtine diviſions. Four times we have been conquer'd; by the Romans, Saxons, Danes, and Normans. And our inteſtine diviſions have likewiſe been great and of long continuance. Witneſs the barons wars, and that long and cruel conteſt between the two houſes of York and Lancaſter.

But

SERM. XXXII.

But to come nearer to our own times, what fearful judgments and calamities of war, and peſtilence, and fire, have many of us ſeen? and how cloſe did they follow one another? what terrible havock did the ſword make amongſt us for many years? and this not the ſword of a foreign enemy, but of a civil war; the miſchiefs whereof were all terminated upon our ſelves, and have given deep wounds, and left broad ſcars upon the moſt conſiderable families in the nation.

——*Alta manent civilis vulnera dextræ.*

This war was drawn out to a great length, and had a tragical end, in the murder of an excellent king; and in the baniſhment of his children into a ſtrange country, whereby they were expoſed to the arts and practices of thoſe of another religion; the miſchievous conſequences whereof we have ever ſince ſadly labour'd under, and do feel them at this day.

And when God was pleas'd in great mercy at laſt to put an end to the miſerable diſtractions and confuſions of almoſt twenty years, by the happy reſtoration of the royal family, and our ancient government; which ſeem'd to promiſe to us a laſting ſettlement, and all the felicities we could wiſh; yet how ſoon was this bright and glorious morning overcaſt, by the reſtleſs and black deſigns of that ſure and inveterate enemy of ours, the church of Rome, for the reſtoring of their religion amongſt us. And there was too much encouragement given to this deſign, by thoſe who had power in their hands, and had brought home with them a ſecret goodwill to it.

For

SERM. XXX.

For this great treſpaſs, and for our many other ſins, God was angry with us, and ſent among us the moſt raging peſtilence that ever was known in this nation, which in the ſpace of eight or nine months ſwept away near a third part of the inhabitants of this vaſt and populous city, and of the ſuburbs thereof: beſides a great many thouſands more in ſeveral parts of the nation. "But we did "not return to the Lord, nor ſeek him for all this."

And therefore, the very next year after, God ſent a terrible and devouring fire, which in leſs than three days time laid the greateſt part of this great city in aſhes. And there is too much reaſon to believe that the enemy did this, that perpetual and implacable enemy of the peace and happineſs of this nation.

And even ſince the time of that dreadful calamity, which is now above twenty years agone, we have been in a continual fear of the cruel deſigns of that party, which had hitherto been inceſſantly working under ground, but now began to ſhew themſelves more openly; and eſpecially ſince a prince of that religion ſucceeded to the crown, our eyes have been ready to fail us for fear, and for looking after thoſe dreadful things that were coming upon us, and ſeem'd to be even at the door. A fear which this nation could eaſily have rid it ſelf of, becauſe they that cauſed it were but a handful in compariſon of us, and could have done nothing without a foreign force and aſſiſtance; had not the principles of humanity, and of our religion too, reſtrain'd us from violence and cruelty, and from

7.

SERM. XXXII.

every thing which had the appearance of undutifulneſs to the government which the providence of GOD had ſet over us. An inſtance of the like patience, under the like provocations, for ſo long a time, and after ſuch viſible and open attempts upon them, when they had the laws ſo plainly on their ſide, I challenge any nation or church in the world, from the very foundation of it, to produce. Inſomuch, that if GOD had not put it into the hearts of our kind neighbours, and of that incomparable prince, who laid and conducted that great deſign with ſo much skill and ſecrecy, to have appear'd ſo ſeaſonably for our reſcue, our patience had infallibly, without a miracle, been our ruin. And I am ſure, if our enemies had ever had the like opportunity in their hands, and had overbalanced us in numbers but half ſo much as we did them, they would never have let it ſlip; but would long ſince have extirpated us utterly, and have "made the remembrance "of us to have ceas'd among men."

And now if you ask me, for what ſins more eſpecially GOD hath ſent all theſe judgments upon us? it will not, I think, become us to be very particular and poſitive in ſuch determinations. Thus much is certain, that we have all ſinn'd and contributed to theſe judgments; every one hath had ſome hand, more or leſs, in pulling down this vengeance upon the nation. But we are all too apt to remove the meritorious cauſe of GOD's judgments as far as we can from our ſelves, and our own party, and upon any ſlight pretence to lay it upon others.

Yet I will venture to inſtance in one or two things which may probably enough have had a more

particu-

particular and immediate hand in drawing down the judgments of God upon us. SERM. XXXII.

Our horrible contempt of religion on the one hand, by our infidelity and profaneneſs; and our ſhameful abuſe of it on the other, by our groſs hypocriſy, and ſheltering great wickedneſs and immoralities under the cloke and profeſſion of religion.

And then, great diſſenſions and diviſions, great uncharitableneſs and bitterneſs of ſpirit among thoſe of the ſame religion; ſo that almoſt from the beginning of our happy reformation the enemy had ſown theſe tares, and by the unwearied malice and arts of the church of Rome, the ſeeds of diſſenſion were ſcattered very early amongſt us; and a ſour humour had been fermenting in the body of the nation, both upon account of religion and civil intereſts, for a long time before things broke out into a civil war.

And more particularly yet: that which is cali'd the great treſpaſs here in the text, their joining in affinity with the people of theſe abominations, by whom they had been detain'd in a long captivity: this, I ſay, ſeems to have had, both from the nature of the thing, and the juſt judgment of God, no ſmall influence upon a great part of the miſeries and calamities which have befallen us. For had it not been for the countenance which popery had by the marriages and alliances of our princes, for two or three generations together, with thoſe of that religion, it had not probably had a continuance among us to this day. Which will, I hope, now be a good warning to thoſe, who have the authority to do it, to make effectual proviſion by law, for the preven-

SERM. XXXII.

tion of the like inconvenience and miſchief in this nation for ever.

2. Another parallel between our caſe and that in the text, is, "that GOD hath puniſh'd us leſs than "our iniquities did deſerve." And this acknowledgment we have as much reaſon to make for our ſelves, as Ezra had to do it in behalf of the Jews, "Thou our GOD haſt puniſh'd us leſs than our ini-"quities deſerve." Thou, our GOD, haſt puniſh'd us; there is the reaſon of ſo much mercy and mitigation. It is God, and not man, with whom we have to do: and therefore it is, that we "the chil-"dren of men are not conſumed." And it is our GOD likewiſe, to whom we have a more peculiar relation, and with whom, by virtue of our profeſſion of chriſtianity, we are in covenant: thou our GOD haſt puniſh'd us leſs than our iniquities deſerve. He might juſtly have "pour'd forth all his "wrath, and have made his jealouſy to have ſmok'd "againſt us, and have blotted out the remembrance "of us from under heaven: he might have given "us up to the will of our enemies, and into the "hands of thoſe whoſe tender mercies are cruelty:" he might have brought us into the net which they had ſpread for us, and have laid a terrible load of affliction upon our loins, and ſuffer'd inſolent men to ride over our heads, and them that hated us with a perfect hatred, to have had the rule over us: but he was graciouſly pleas'd "to remember mercy in the "midſt of judgment, and to repent himſelf for his "ſervants, when he ſaw that their power was gone," and that things were come to that extremity, that we were in all humane probability utterly unable to have wrought out our own deliverance. 3. The

SERM. XXXII.

3. The laſt parallel between our caſe, and that in the text, is the great and wonderful deliverance which GOD hath wrought for us. And whilſt I am ſpeaking of this, "GOD is my witneſs, whom I "ſerve in the goſpel of his SON," that I do not ſay one word upon this occaſion in flattery to men, but in true thankfulneſs to almighty GOD, and conſtrain'd thereto from a juſt ſenſe of his great mercy to us all, in this marvellous deliverance, in this mighty ſalvation which he wrought for us. So that we may ſay with Ezra, "Since thou our GOD haſt given us ſuch "a deliverance as this:" ſo great, that we know not how to compare it with any thing but itſelf. GOD hath given us this deliverance. And therefore, "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but to thy "name be the praiſe." For thou knoweſt, and we are conſcious to ourſelves, that we did in no wiſe deſerve it, but quite the contrary. GOD hath given it, and it ought to be ſo much the welcomer to us, for coming from ſuch a hand. It is the LORD's doing, and therefore ought to be the more marvellous in our eyes. It is a deliverance full of mercy, and I had almoſt ſaid, full of miracle. The finger of GOD was viſibly in it; and there are plain ſignatures and characters upon it, of a more immediate divine interpoſition. And if we will not wiſely conſider the LORD's doing, we have reaſon to ſtand in awe of that threatning of his, "Becauſe they re- Pſal. "gard not the works of the LORD, nor the opera- xxviii. 5. "tion of his hands, he ſhall deſtroy them, and not "build them up."

It was a wonderful deliverance indeed, if we conſider all the circumſtances of it: the greatneſs of it; and the

SERM. XXXII.

the ſtrangeneſs of the means whereby it was brought about; and the ſuddenneſs and eaſineſs of it.

The greatneſs of it; it was a great deliverance, from the greateſt fears, and from the greateſt dangers; the apparent and imminent danger of the ſaddeſt thraldom and bondage, civil and ſpiritual; both of ſoul and body.

And it was brought about in a very extraordinary manner, and by very ſtrange means: whether we conſider the greatneſs and difficulty of the enterpriſe; or the cloſeneſs and ſecrecy of the deſign, which muſt of neceſſity be communicated at leaſt to the chief of thoſe who were to aſſiſt and engage in it: eſpecially the ſtates of the United Provinces, who were then in ſo much danger themſelves, and wanted more than their own forces for their own defence and ſecurity: a kindneſs never to be forgotten by the Engliſh nation. And beſides all this, the difficulties and diſappointments which happen'd, after the deſign was open and manifeſt, from the uncertainties of wind and weather, and many other accidents impoſſible to be foreſeen and prevented. And yet in concluſion a ſtrange concurrence of all things, on all ſides, to bring the thing which the providence of GOD intended to a happy iſſue and effect.

And we muſt not here forget the many worthies of our nation, who did ſo generouſly run all hazards of life and fortune, for the preſervation of our religion, and the aſſerting of our ancient laws and liberties.

Theſe are all ſtrange and unuſual means; but, which is ſtranger yet, the very counſels and methods of our enemies did prepare the way for all this,

this, and perhaps more effectually, than any counsel and contrivance of our own could have done it. For even the jesuits, those formal politicians by book and rule, without any consideration or true knowledge of the temper, and interest, and other circumstances of the people they were designing upon, and had to deal withal; and indeed without any care to know them: I say, the jesuits, who for so long a time, and for so little reason, have affected the reputation of the deepest and craftiest statesmen in the world, have upon this great occasion, and when their whole kingdom of darkness lay at stake, by a more than ordinary infatuation and blindness, so outwitted and over-reach'd themselves in their own counsels, that they have really contributed as much, or more, to our deliverance from the destruction which they had designed to bring upon us, than all our wisest and best friends could have done.

And then if we consider further, how sudden and surprizing it was, so that we could hardly believe it when it was accomplish'd; and like the children of Israel, "when the LORD turned again the captivity "of Zion, we were like them that dream." When all things were driving on furiously, and in great haste, then GOD gave an unexpected check to the designs of men, and stopp'd them in their full career. Who among us could have imagin'd, but a few months ago, so happy and so speedy an end of our fears and troubles? GOD hath at once scatter'd all our fears, and outdone all our hopes by the greatness and suddenness of our deliverance. "O that "men would praise the LORD for his goodness, "and for his wonderful works to the children of "men."

And

SERM. XXXII.

And laſtly, if we conſider the cheapneſs and eaſineſs of this deliverance. All this was done without a battle, and almoſt without blood. All the danger is, leſt we ſhould loath it, and grow ſick of it, becauſe it was ſo very eaſy. Had it come upon harder terms, and had we waded to it through a red ſea of blood, we would have valued it more. But this ſurely is great wantonneſs, and whatever we think of it, one of the higheſt provocations imaginable: for there can hardly be a fouler and blacker ingratitude towards almighty GOD, than to ſlight ſo great a deliverance, only becauſe it came to us ſo eaſily, and hath coſt us ſo very cheap.

I will mention but one circumſtance more, which may not be altogether unworthy our obſervation. That GOD ſeems in this laſt deliverance, in ſome ſort to have united and brought together all the great deliverances which he hath been pleas'd to work for this nation againſt all the remarkable attempts of popery, from the beginning of our reformation. Our wonderful deliverance from the formidable Spaniſh invaſion deſign'd againſt us, happen'd in the year 1588. And now juſt a hundred years after, GOD was pleaſed to bring about this laſt great and moſt happy deliverance. That horrid gunpowder conſpiracy, without precedent, and without parallel, was deſign'd to have been executed upon the fifth day of November; the ſame day upon which his highneſs the prince of Orange landed the forces here in England which he brought hither for our reſcue. So that this is a day every way worthy to be ſolemnly ſet apart and joyfully celebrated by this church and nation, throughout all generations; as

the

the fitteſt of all other to comprehend, and to put us in mind to commemorate all the great deliverances which GOD hath wrought for us, from popery, and its inſeparable companion, arbitrary power. And we may then ſay with the holy pſalmiſt, "This is the "LORD's doing, it is marvellous in our eyes. This "is the day which the LORD hath made, we will "rejoice and be glad in it." SERM. XXXII. Pſal. cxviii. 23, 24.

Secondly, as the caſe in the text is much like ours, ſo let us take heed that the doom and ſentence there be not ſo too. "If after all that is come upon us "for our evil deeds, and for our great treſpaſs, and "ſince GOD has puniſh'd us leſs than our iniquities "did deſerve; ſhould we again break his command-"ments, and join in affinity with the people of "theſe abominations, would he not be angry with "us 'till he had conſumed us, ſo that there ſhould "be no remnant nor eſcaping?" What could we in reaſon expect after all this, but utter ruin and deſtruction? We may here apply, as St. Paul does, GOD's dealing with the people of Iſrael, to the times of the goſpel; for he ſpeaks of it as an example and admonition to all ages to the end of the world. "Now theſe things, ſays the apoſtle, were "our examples, to the intent we ſhould not luſt "after evil things, as they alſo luſted; neither be ye "idolaters, as were ſome of them, &c. neither let "us tempt CHRIST, as ſome of them alſo tempt-"ed, and were deſtroyed of ſerpents." For the explication of this paſſage we muſt have recourſe to the hiſtory, which gives this account of it. "And the peo-"ple ſpake againſt GOD, and againſt Moſes, where-"fore have ye brought us up out of Egypt, to die 1 Cor. x. 6, 7, 9, 10, 11. Numb. xxi. 5, 6.

8.

SERM. XXXII.

" in the wilderneſs? &c." impeaching GOD and his ſervant Moſes, as if by this deliverance they had put them into a much worſe condition than they were in when they were in Egypt. " And the LORD " ſent fiery ſerpents among the people, and they " bit the people, and much people of Iſrael died." But how was this a tempting of CHRIST? " Nei- " ther let us tempt CHRIST, as ſome of them alſo " tempted;" that is, let not us, now under the goſpel, tempt our ſaviour and deliverer, as the Iſraelites did theirs, by ſlighting that great deliverance, and by ſpeaking againſt GOD, and againſt Moſes. " Neither murmur ye, as ſome of them alſo mur- " mured, and were deſtroyed of the deſtroyer." And how far this may concern us, and all others, to the end of the world, who ſhall tempt CHRIST, the great patron and deliverer of his church, and murmur without cauſe, as the Iſraelites did, at the deliverance which he works for them, and againſt the inſtruments of it, the apoſtle tells us in the next words: " Now all theſe things happened unto them " for enſamples, or types; and they are written for " our admonition upon whom the ends of the world " are come." Let us not tempt CHRIST; who is now beginning the glorious deliverance of his church from the tyranny of antichriſt.

Ver. 11.

To draw now towards a concluſion; I will comprehend my advice to you upon the whole matter, in as few words as I can.

Let us uſe this great deliverance which GOD hath given us, [ſuch a deliverance as this] from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; not by uſing them as they would have done us, had we fallen

fallen under their power, with great inſolence and rage, and cruelty; but with great moderation and clemency, making as few examples of ſeverity as will be conſiſtent with our future ſecurity from the like attempts upon our religion and laws: and even in the execution of juſtice upon the greateſt offenders, let us not give ſo much countenance to the ill examples which have been ſet of extravagant fines and puniſhments, as to imitate thoſe patterns which with ſo much reaſon we abhor; no, not in the puniſhment of the authors of them. SERM. XXXII.

And let us endeavour, for once, to be ſo wiſe, as not to forfeit the fruits of this deliverance, and to hinder ourſelves of the benefit and advantage of it, by breaches and diviſions among ourſelves. As we have no reaſon to deſire it, ſo I think we can hardly ever hope to underſtand popery better, and the cruel deſigns of it, than we do already, both from the long trial and experience which we have had of it in this nation, and likewiſe from that diſmal and horrid view which hath of late been given us of the true ſpirit and temper of it in one of our neighbour nations, which hath long pretended to the profeſſion of the moſt refin'd and moderate popery in the world; but hath now at laſt ſhewed itſelf in its true colours, and in the perfection of a perſecuting ſpirit; and have therein given us a moſt ſad and deplorable inſtance of a religion corrupted and degenerated into that which, if it be poſſible, is worſe than none.

And ſince, by the undeſerved mercy of God to us, we have, upon ſuch eaſy terms in compariſon, eſcap'd their rage and fury; let us now at length re-

SERM. XXXII.

ſolve, never to join in affinity with the people of theſe abominations; ſince our alliances with them by marriage have had ſo fatal an influence, both upon the publick peace and tranquillity of the nation, and upon the welfare alſo of private families. I have known many inſtances of this kind, but hardly ever yet ſaw one that prov'd happy; but a great many that have been pernicious and ruinous to thoſe proteſtant families in which ſuch unequal, and, as I think, unlawful matches have been made: not that ſuch marriages are void in themſelves, but yet for all that ſinful; becauſe of the apparent danger and temptation to which thoſe of our church and religion that enter into them do evidently expoſe themſelves, of being ſeduc'd from their religion; not by the good arguments which the other can offer to that purpoſe, but by the ill arts which they have the confidence and the conſcience to make uſe of in the making of proſelytes.

And let us pay our moſt hearty and thankful acknowledgments, chiefly and in the firſt place to almighty GOD, the bleſſed author of this deliverance; and under him, to that happy inſtrument, whom GOD hath been pleaſed, in great pity to this ſinful and unworthy nation, to raiſe up on purpoſe for it, his highneſs the prince of Orange; and to that end did in his all-wiſe providence lay the foundation of our then future deliverance, in that auſpicious match which was concluded here in England about eleven years ago, between this renowned prince and our excellent princeſs.

This is that moſt illuſtrious houſe of Naſſau and Orange, which GOD hath ſo highly honoured above all

all the families of the earth, to give a check to the two great aſpiring monarchies of the weſt, and bold attempters upon the liberties of Europe: to the one, in the laſt age; and to the other, in the preſent. As if the princes of this valiant and victorious line had been of the race of Hercules, born to reſcue mankind from oppreſſion, and to quell monſters. SERM. XXXII.

And laſtly, let us beſeech almighty GOD, all whoſe ways and works are perfect, that he would eſtabliſh that which he hath wrought, and ſtill carry it on to further and greater perfection. Which after ſuch an earneſt of his favour and good-will to us, we have no reaſon to doubt but that he is ready to do for us; if by our own fickleneſs and inconſtancy, diſguſting the deliverance now it is come, which we ſo earneſtly deſired before it came; if by our ungrateful murmurings and diſcontents, by our own fooliſh heats and animoſities, kindled and carried on by the ill deſigns of ſome, working upon the tenderneſs and ſcruples of others, under the ſpecious pretences of conſcience and loyalty: I ſay, if by ſome or all theſe ways we do not refuſe the bleſſing which GOD now offers, and defeat and fruſtrate the merciful deſign of this wonderful revolution; GOD will ſtill "rejoice "over us, to do us good, and think thoughts of "peace towards us, thoughts of good, and not of "evil, to give us an expected end" of our long troubles and confuſions. But if we will "not know, "in this our day, the things which belong to our "peace," our deſtruction will then be of ourſelves; and there will be no need that GOD ſhould be angry with us, for we ſhall be undone by our own differences

ferences and quarrels about the way and means of our being ſaved; and ſo be angry with one another till we be conſumed. Which GOD, of his infinite goodneſs, give us all the grace and wiſdom to prevent: for his mercies ſake, in JESUS CHRIST, to whom, with thee, O FATHER, and the HOLY GHOST, be all honour and glory, thankſgiving and praiſe, both now and ever. Amen.

SERMON XXXIII.

Of forgiveneſs of injuries, and againſt revenge.

Preached before the QUEEN at *Whitehall*, *March* 8, $168\frac{8}{9}$.

MATTHEW v. 44.

But I ſay unto you, love your enemies, bleſs them that curſe you, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that deſpitefully uſe you, and perſecute you.

SERM. XXXIII.

THE goſpel hath promiſed forgiveneſs of ſins to us upon two conditions: that we ſincerely repent of the ſins which we have committed againſt GOD; and, that we heartily forgive to men the injuries and offences which they have been guilty of towards us.

I ſhall at this time, by GOD's aſſiſtance, treat of the latter of theſe, from the words which I have recited to you;

you; which are part of our SAVIOUR's excellent SERM. ſermon upon the mount. In which he doth not XXXIII. only explain, but enlarge and perfect the moral and natural law, by adding to it precepts and prohibitions of greater perfection, than either the law of Moſes or the natural law, in their largeſt extent, did contain.

He forbids polygamy, and divorce except only in the caſe of adultery; and likewiſe revenge; none of which were either forbidden by the law of nature, or by the law which was given by Moſes.

And to theſe prohibitions our bleſſed SAVIOUR adds ſeveral new precepts of greater perfection than any laws that were extant before. "But I ſay unto "you, love your enemies." The jewiſh law commanded them to love their neighbours, meaning their brethren and thoſe of their own nation: but our SAVIOUR, by commanding us to love our enemies, hath in the moſt emphatical manner that can be commanded us to love all men. For if any were to be excluded from our charity, none ſo likely to be ſo as our enemies. So that after a command to love our enemies it was needleſs to name any others; becauſe men are naturally apt to love thoſe that love them.

"I ſay unto you, love your enemies;" here the inward affection is requir'd. "Bleſs them that curſe "you;" here outward civility and affability are requir'd, in oppoſition to rude and uncivil language; for ſo bleſſing and curſing do in ſcripture frequently ſignify. "Do good to them that hate you," here real acts of kindneſs are commanded to be done by us to our bittereſt and moſt malicious enemies.

"Pray

SERM. XXXIII. "Pray for them that deſpitefully uſe you, and perſecute you." Theſe are the higheſt expreſſions of enmity that can be, calumny and cruelty; and yet we are commanded to pray for thoſe that touch us in theſe two tendereſt points of all other, our reputation and our life. And to ſecure the ſincerity of our charity towards our enemies, we are requir'd to expreſs it by our hearty prayers to GOD for them: to GOD, I ſay, before whom it is both impious and dangerous to diſſemble; and from whom we can expect no mercy for our ſelves, if with feigned lips we beg it of him for others.

You ſee what is the duty here required; that we bear a ſincere affection to our moſt malicious and implacable enemies, and be ready upon occaſion to give real teſtimony of it.

And becauſe this may ſeem a hard duty, and not ſo eaſy to be reconciled either to our inclination or our reaſon; I ſhall endeavour to ſhew, that this law is not only reaſonable, but much more perfect and excellent, and the practice of it more eaſy and delightful, and upon all accounts much more for our benefit and advantage, than the contrary. And that upon four conſiderations; which I ſhall endeavour to repreſent with their juſt advantage, and ſo as may, I hope, not only convince our judgment of the reaſonableneſs of this precept, but likewiſe bend and ſway our wills to the obedience and practice of it.

I. If we conſider the nature of the act here required, which is to love; which, when it is not a mere paſſion, but under the government of our reaſon, is the moſt natural, and eaſy, and delightful of all the affections which GOD hath planted in humane nature: whereas

whereas ill-will, and hatred, and revenge, are very troubleſome and vexatious paſſions. Both the deviſing of miſchief, and the accompliſhment of it, and the reflection upon it afterwards, are all uneaſy; and the conſequences of it many times pernicious to our ſelves. The very deſign of revenge is troubleſome, and puts the ſpirits into an unnatural fermentation and tumult. The man that meditates it is always reſtleſs, his very ſoul is ſtung, ſwells and boils, is in pain and anguiſh, hath no eaſe, no enjoyment of it ſelf ſo long as this paſſion reigns. The execution of it may perhaps be attended with ſome preſent pleaſure, but that pleaſure is unreaſonable and brutiſh, momentary and ſhort, like a flaſh of lightning, which vaniſheth in the twinkling of an eye.

It is commonly ſaid that revenge is ſweet, but to a calm and conſiderate mind patience and forgiveneſs are ſweeter, and do afford a much more rational and ſolid and durable pleaſure than revenge. The monuments of our mercy and goodneſs are a far more pleaſing and delightful ſpectacle, than our rage and cruelty. And no ſort of thought does uſually haunt men with more terror, than the reflection upon what they have done in the way of revenge.

Beſides that the conſequences of this paſſion do commonly prove very prejudicial to our ſelves. For the revenge of one injury doth naturally draw on more, and will oblige us for the ſame reaſon to a new revenge of them; and this brings on a perpetual and endleſs circulation of injuries and revenges. So that whoever ſeeks revenge upon another, doth commonly in the iſſue take it upon himſelf; and whilſt he thinks to transfer the injury which he hath

8.

SERM. XXXIII. receiv'd upon him that did it, he doubles it upon himſelf.

Such and ſo great are the troubles and inconveniences of a malicious and revengeful temper: "but "there is no torment in love," as St. John excellently ſays. To be kindly affection'd towards all, to bear no grudge or ill-will, no thought of diſpleaſure or revenge towards any man, is the eaſieſt poſture, the moſt pleaſant ſtate of the mind. So that if not for their ſakes, yet for our own, we ſhould "love "our enemies, and do good to them that hate us;" becauſe to be thus affected towards all men, is as great a kindneſs to our ſelves, as it is charity to others.

II. If we conſider the qualification of the object; it is our enemy whom we are requir'd to love. In whom, though there be ſomething that is juſtly diſguſtful, yet there is ſomething alſo that is lovely; and if we perſiſt in our kindneſs to him, notwithſtanding his enmity to us, the enmity may wear off, and perhaps at length be chang'd into a ſincere and firm friendſhip.

'Tis true indeed, that with regard to our ſelves, perſonal enmity towards us is one of the moſt inconvenient qualities that a man can have, but not therefore the worſt in it ſelf. If we could be impartial and lay aſide prejudice, we might perhaps diſcern ſeveral very lovely qualities in him who hates us: and virtue is to be own'd, and prais'd, and lov'd, even in an enemy. And perhaps his enmity towards us is not ſo great and inexcuſable a fault, as we apprehend; he is not perhaps our enemy to that degree, nor ſo altogether without cauſe, as we imagine; poſſibly we have provok'd him, or by his own miſtake, or through the

the malicious repreſentation of others he may be induc'd to think ſo: and are not we our ſelves liable to the like miſapprehenſions concerning others, of which we are many times afterwards convinc'd and aſham'd? and ſo may he, and then his enmity will ceaſe, if we will but have a little patience with him, as we always wiſh in the like caſe that others would have with us.

At the worſt, though never ſo ſore and cauſeleſs an enemy, though never ſo bad a man, yet he is a man, and as ſuch, hath ſomething in him which the blindeſt paſſion cannot deny to be good and amiable. He hath the ſame nature with our ſelves, which we cannot hate, or deſpiſe, without hatred and contempt of our ſelves. Let a man's faults be what they will, they do not deſtroy his nature and make him ceaſe to be a man. Dr. *Barrow.*

The two great foundations of love are relation and likeneſs. "No one thing, ſays Tully, is ſo like, ſo "equal to another, as one man is to another." What difference ſoever there may be between us and another man, yea, though he be our enemy, yet he is ſtill like us in the main; and perhaps but too like us in that for which we find ſo much fault with him, a proneneſs to offer affronts and injuries.

And there is an eſſential relation, as well as likeneſs, between one man and another, which nothing can ever diſſolve, becauſe it is founded in that which no man can diveſt himſelf of, in humane nature. So far is it from being true, which Mr. Hobbes aſſerts as the fundamental principle of his politicks, "That men are "naturally in a ſtate of war and enmity with one "another," that the contrary principle, laid down by

SERM. XXXIII.

a much deeper and wiſer man, I mean Ariſtotle, is moſt certainly true, "that men are naturally akin "and friends to each other." Some unhappy accidents and occaſions may make men enemies, but naturally every man is a friend to another: and that is the ſureſt and moſt unalterable reaſon of things which is founded in nature, not that which ſprings from mutable accidents and occaſions. So that whoever is recommended to us under the notion of a man, ought not to be look'd upon by us, and treated as an enemy.

Conſider farther, that an enemy, even whilſt he is exerciſing his enmity towards us, may do us many acts of real advantage; which, though they do not proceed from kindneſs, yet in truth are benefits. The malicious cenſures of our enemies, if we make a right uſe of them, may prove of greater advantage to us, than the civilities of our beſt friends. We can eaſily afford, nay the wiſeſt of men can hardly forbear, to love a flatterer, to embrace him, and to take him into our boſom; and yet an open enemy is a thouſand times better and leſs dangerous than he. It is good for many men that they have had enemies, who have many times been to them the happy occaſion of reforming thoſe faults, which none but an enemy would have taken the freedom, I had almoſt ſaid, would have had the friendſhip to have told them of.

But what if after all, this enemy of ours, this hated man, prove to be one of our beſt friends? For ſo reconciled enemies uſually are. And if any thing will reconcile an enemy, love and kindneſs will. An obſtinate goodneſs is apt to conquer even the worſt of men. It is hardly in the nature of man to withſtand

withſtand the kindneſs of one whom, by all that we could do, we have not been able to make our enemy. After a man hath done the greateſt injury to another, not only to find no revenge following upon it, but the firſt opportunity taken to oblige him, is ſo very ſurprizing, that it can hardly fail to gain upon the worſt diſpoſition, and to melt down the hardeſt temper. So that we ſhould love our enemies, if not for what they are at preſent, yet for what they may be, and in hope that by theſe means they may in time become our friends. SERM. XXXIII.

III. If we conſider the excellency and generoſity of the thing itſelf. "To love our enemies, and to do "good to them that hate us," is the perfection of goodneſs, and the advancement of it to its higheſt pitch. It is the moſt excellent and perfect act of the greateſt and moſt perfect of all graces and virtues, I mean charity; which by St. Paul is call'd "the bond "of perfection;" and by St. James, "the perfect "and the royal law:" becauſe it inſpires men with a greatneſs of mind fit for kings and princes, in whom nothing is more admirable than a generous goodneſs and clemency, even towards great enemies and offenders, ſo far as is conſiſtent with the publick good. Love for love is but juſtice and gratitude; love for no love is favour and kindneſs; but love for hatred and enmity is a moſt divine temper, a ſteddy and immutable goodneſs that is not to be ſtirr'd by provocation, and ſo far from being conquer'd that it is rather confirm'd by its contrary: for if hatred and enmity do not extinguiſh love, what can? This is goodneſs indeed; not only without merit and obligation, without invitation or motive; but againſt all reaſonable

SERM. XXXIII.

able expectation, and in deſpite of all temptation and provocation to the contrary.

So that to return good for evil, and love for hatred, is one of the greateſt arguments of a great mind, and of deep wiſdom and conſideration: for naturally our firſt inclinations and thoughts towards our enemies, are full of anger and revenge; but our ſecond and wiſer thoughts will tell us, that forgiveneſs is much more generous than revenge. And a more glorious victory cannot be gain'd over another man than this, that when the injury began on his part, the kindneſs ſhould begin on ours. If both the ways were equally in our power, yet it is a much more deſirable conqueſt to overcome evil with good, than with evil. By this, we can only conquer our enemy, and may perhaps fail in that; but by the other, we certainly conquer ourſelves, and perhaps our enemy too; overcoming him in the nobleſt manner, and walking him gently 'till he be cool, and without force effectually ſubduing him to be our friend. This, as one fitly compares it, is like a great and wiſe general, by art and ſtratagem, by meer dint of ſkill and conduct, by patience and wiſe delay; without ever ſtriking a ſtroke, or ſhedding one drop of blood, to vanquiſh an enemy, and to make an end of the war without ever putting it to the hazard of a battle.

Dr. Barrow.

Revenge is blind and raſh, and does always proceed from impotency and weakneſs of mind. 'Tis anger that ſpurs men on to it; and anger is certainly one of the fooliſheſt paſſions of humane nature, and which commonly betrays men to the moſt imprudent and unreaſonable things. So Solomon obſerves, "He that is haſty of ſpirit exalteth folly:"

Prov. xiv. 29.

and

and again, "Anger reſteth in the boſom of fools:" but to be able to bear provocation, is an argument of great wiſdom; and to forgive it, of a great mind: ſo the ſame wiſe man tells us, "He that is "ſlow to anger is better than the mighty, and he "that ruleth his ſpirit, than he that taketh a city." It is a greater thing, in caſe of great provocation, to calm a man's own ſpirit, than to ſtorm and take a ſtrong city. SERM. XXXIII. Eccl. vii. 9. Prov. xvi. 32.

Whereas the angry man loſeth and lets fall the government of himſelf, and lays the reins upon the neck of the wild beaſt, his own brutiſh appetite and paſſion; which hurries him on firſt to revenge, and then to repentance for the folly which he hath been guilty of in gratifying ſo unreaſonable a paſſion. For it very ſeldom happens that any man executes an act of revenge, but the very next moment after he hath done it, he is ſorry for it, and wiſheth he had not done it: whereas patience and forgiveneſs do wiſely prevent both the miſchief to others, and the trouble to ourſelves, which is uſually conſequent upon revenge.

IV. If we conſider the perfection and prevalency of the examples which the goſpel propoſeth to us, to allure and engage us to the practice of this duty. And they are the examples of GOD himſelf, and of the SON of GOD in the nature of man.

1. The example of GOD himſelf. The ſcripture doth frequently ſet before us the goodneſs of GOD's common providence to ſinners, for our pattern. And this is the argument whereby our bleſſed SAVIOUR preſſeth the duty in the text upon us, in the verſe immediately after: "That ye may be the chil- Ver. 45.

"dren

SERM. XXXIII.

" dren of your heavenly FATHER, who maketh his " ſun to riſe on the evil and the good, and his rain " to fall on the juſt and the unjuſt." The ſame argument Seneca alſo urgeth to the ſame purpoſe. " How many (ſays he) are unworthy of the light, " and yet the day viſits them?" And ſpeaking of the gods, " They beſtow, (ſays he) their benefits upon " the unthankful, and are ready to help thoſe who " make a bad conſtruction and uſe of their kindneſs." And almoſt in the very words of our SAVIOUR, *Etiam ingratis ſol oritur*, &c. " The ſun riſeth even " upon the moſt vile and profligate perſons, and the " ſeas are open to pirates."

Thus is GOD affected towards thoſe who are guilty of the greateſt provocations towards him. He beſtows upon them the gifts of his common providence; and not only ſo, but is ready to forgive innumerable offences to them for CHRIST's ſake. This pattern the apoſtle propoſeth to our imitation, " Be ye kind, " tender-hearted, forbearing one another, forgiving " one another, even as GOD for CHRIST's ſake hath " forgiven you: be ye therefore imitators of GOD " as dear children." This temper and diſpoſition of mind, is the prime excellency and perfection of the divine nature; and who would not be ambitious to be like the moſt perfect and beſt of beings? And ſo our bleſſed SAVIOUR concludes this argument, in the laſt verſe of this chapter, " Be ye therefore perfect, " as your father which is in heaven is perfect;" which St. Luke renders, " Be ye therefore merciful, " as your father which is in heaven is merciful." So that in that very thing, which we think to be ſo hard and difficult, you ſee that we have perfection itſelf for

Eph. iv. 32.

Chap. v. 1.

for our pattern. And this example ought to be of so much greater force with us, by how much greater reaſon there is, why we ſhould do thus to one another, than why GOD ſhould do thus to us. Our offences againſt GOD are more and greater, than any man ever was or could be guilty of towards us: beſides, that there are many conſiderations which ought to tie up our hands, and may reaſonably reſtrain us from falling furiouſly upon one another, which can have no place at all in GOD. We may juſtly fear, that the conſequence of our revenge may return upon ourſelves, and that it may come to be our own eaſe to ſtand in need of mercy and forgiveneſs from others; and therefore out of neceſſary caution and prudence, we ſhould take heed not to ſet any bad example in this kind, leſt it ſhould recoil upon ourſelves. We who ſtand ſo much in need of forgiveneſs ourſelves, ought in all reaſon to be very eaſy to forgive others. But now the divine nature is infinitely above any real injury or ſuffering. GOD can never ſtand in need of pity or forgiveneſs; and yet of his own meer goodneſs, without any intereſt or deſign, how ſlow is he to anger, and how ready to forgive? SERM. XXXIII.

And, which comes yet nearer to us, there is alſo the example of the SON of GOD, our bleſſed SAVIOUR; who in our nature, and in caſe of the greateſt injuries and provocations imaginable, did practiſe this virtue to the height: and all this for our ſakes, as well as for our example. So that he requires nothing of us, but what he himſelf ſubmitted to with the greateſt patience and conſtancy of mind, in our ſtead, and wholly for our advantage.

SERM. XXXIII.

" He render'd good for evil" to all mankind, and ſhew'd greater love to us, whilſt we were enemies to him, than ever any man did to his friend.

" He pray'd for thoſe that deſpitefully uſed him and " perſecuted him." And this, not upon cool conſideration, after the injury was done, and the pains of his ſufferings were over; but whilſt the ſenſe and ſmart of them was upon him, and in the very agony and bitterneſs of death: in the height of all his anguiſh, he pour'd out his ſoul an offering for the ſins of men, and his blood a ſacrifice to GOD, for the expiation of the guilt of that very ſin whereby they ſhed it; pleading with GOD, in the behalf of his murderers, the only excuſe that was poſſible to be made for their malice, that is, their ignorance; and ſpending his laſt breath in that moſt charitable prayer for them, " Father, " forgive them, for they know not what they do."

The laſt declaration which he made of his mind, was love to his enemies; and the laſt legacy he bequeath'd was an earneſt requeſt to GOD for the forgiveneſs of his perſecutors and murderers.

So that if any example ought to be dear to us, and effectually to engage us to the imitation of it, this of our bleſſed SAVIOUR ſhould; ſince the injuries which he ſuffer'd have ſav'd us from ſuffering, and the greateſt bleſſing and happineſs that ever befel mankind is due to this excellent example. And then with what confidence, nay with what conſcience, can we pretend to ſhare in the benefits of this example, without imitating the virtues of it?

Can we ſeriouſly contemplate the exceſſive kindneſs and charity of the SON of GOD to the ſinful ſons of men, after all our bittereſt enmity towards him, and

moſt

moſt cruel and injurious uſage of him; and all this charity exercis'd towards us, whilſt he was under the actual ſenſe and ſuffering of theſe things: and yet not be provok'd by an example ſo admirable in itſelf, and of ſuch mighty advantage to us, "to go and do likewiſe?" SERM. XXXIII.

But notwithſtanding the power of theſe arguments to perſuade to this duty, I muſt not diſſemble ſome objections which are, I believe, in many of your minds againſt it; and to which for the full clearing of this matter, it will be fit to give ſome ſatisfaction. And they are theſe:

1. That this precept in the text does not ſeem ſo well to agree with another of our bleſſed SAVIOUR's, in another evangeliſt, "If thy brother treſpaſs againſt "thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. "And if he treſpaſs againſt thee ſeven times in a day, "and ſeven times in a day turn again to thee, ſaying, "I repent, thou ſhalt forgive him." Here our bleſſed SAVIOUR ſeems not to require forgiveneſs, unleſs he that hath done the injury declare his repentance for it; but the text plainly requires us to forgive thoſe who are ſo far from repenting of their enmity, that they ſtill purſue it, and exerciſe it upon us. Thus our LORD teacheth us, and thus he himſelf practiſed towards his perſecutors. Luke xvii. 3, 4.

But this appearance of contradiction will quickly vaniſh, if we conſider that forgiveneſs is ſometimes taken chiefly for abſtaining from revenge; and ſo far we are to forgive our enemies, even whilſt they continue ſo, and though they do not repent: and not only ſo, but we are alſo to pray for them, and to do good offices to them, eſpecially of common humanity: and this is the meaning of the precept in the text. But ſome-

SERM XXXIII.

times forgiveneſs does ſignify a perfect reconciliation to thoſe that have offended us, ſo as to take them again into our friendſhip; which they are by no means fit for, 'till they have repented of their enmity, and laid it aſide. And this is plainly the meaning of the other text.

2. It is further objected, That this ſeems to be a very imprudent thing, and of dangerous conſequence to ourſelves; becauſe by bearing one injury ſo patiently, and forgiving it ſo eaſily, we invite more; and not only tempt our enemy to go on, but others alſo by his example to do the like: which will make ill-natur'd men to provoke us on purpoſe, with a crafty deſign to wreſt benefits from us: for what better trade can a man drive, than to gain benefits in exchange for injuries?

To this I anſwer three things:

Firſt, it is to be feared that there are but few ſo very good, as to make this kind return for injuries: perhaps, of thoſe that call themſelves chriſtians, not one in a hundred. And he is not a cunning man that will venture to make an enemy, when there is the odds of a hundred to one againſt him, that this enemy of his will take the firſt opportunity, to take his revenge upon him.

Secondly, it is alſo on the other hand to be hoped, that but very few are ſo prodigiouſly bad, as to make ſo barbarous a return for the unexpected kindneſs of a generous enemy. And this is encouragement enough to the practice of this duty, if there be a probable hope that it will have a good effect; and however, if it ſhould fall out otherwiſe, yet this would not be reaſon enough to diſcourage our goodneſs, eſpecially ſince the kindneſs which we do to our friends is liable almoſt to an equal objection, that they may prove ungrateful,

grateful, and become our enemies; it having been often seen that great benefits, and such as are beyond requital, instead of making a man more a friend, have made him an enemy. SERM. XXXIII.

Thirdly, our SAVIOUR never intended by this precept, that our goodness should be blind and void of all prudence and discretion, but that it should be so managed as to make our enemy sensible both of his own fault, and of our favour; and so, as to give him as little encouragement, as there is reason for it, to hope to find the like favour again upon the like provocation. Our SAVIOUR commands us to do the thing, but hath left it to our prudence to do it in such a manner as may be most effectual, both to reclaim the offender, and likewise to secure ourselves against future and further injuries.

3. Lastly, it is objected, What can we do more to our best friends, than to love them and bless them, than to do good to them and to pray for them? And are we then to make no difference betwixt our enemies and our friends?

Yes surely; and so we may, notwithstanding this precept: for there are degrees of love, and there are benefits of several rates and sizes. Those of the first rate we may with reason bestow upon our friends, and with those of a second or third rate there is all the reason in the world why our enemies should be very well contented. Besides that, we may abstain from revenge, yea, and love our enemy, and wish him and do him good; and yet it will not presently be necessary that we should take him into our bosom, and treat and trust him as our intimate and familiar friend: for every one that is not our enemy, is not fit to be our friend; much less

SERM. XXXIII

leſs one that hath been our enemy, and perhaps is ſo ſtill. There muſt be a great change in him that hath been our enemy, and we muſt have had long experience of him before it be fit, if ever it be ſo, to take him into our friendſhip.

All that now remains, is to make ſome inferences from the diſcourſe which I have made upon this argument, by way of application. And they ſhall be theſe four:

I. If we think it ſo very difficult to demean our ſelves towards our enemies, as the chriſtian religion doth plainly require us to do; to forgive them, and love them, and pray for them, and to do good offices to them, then certainly it concerns us in prudence to be very careful how we make enemies to our ſelves. One of the firſt principles of humane wiſdom, in the conduct of our lives, I have ever thought to be this, to have a few intimate friends, and to make no enemies, if it be poſſible, to our ſelves. St. Paul lays a great ſtreſs upon this, and preſſeth it very earneſtly. For after he had forbidden revenge,

Rom. xii. 17. "Recompenſe to no man evil for evil." As if he were very ſenſible how hard a matter it is to bring men to this, he adviſeth in the next words, to pre-

Ver. 18. vent, if it be poſſible, the occaſions of revenge, "If "it be poſſible, and as much as lieth in you, live "peacably with all men:" that is, if we can avoid it, have no enmity with any man. And that for two weighty reaſons:

The firſt I have already intimated; becauſe it is ſo very hard to behave our ſelves towards enemies as we ought. This we ſhall find to be a difficult duty to fleſh and blood; and it will require great wiſdom and

and conſideration, and humility of mind, for a man to bring down his ſpirit to the obedience of this command: for the fewer enemies we have, the leſs occaſion will there be of conteſting this hard point with our ſelves.

And the other reaſon is, I think, yet plainer and more convincing, becauſe enemies will come of themſelves, and let a man do what he can, he ſhall have ſome. Friendſhip is a thing that needs to be cultivated, if we would have it come to any thing; but enemies, like ill weeds, will ſpring up of themſelves without our care and toil. The enemy, as our SAVIOUR calls the devil, will ſow theſe tares in the night, and when we leaſt diſcern it will ſcatter the ſeeds of diſcord and enmity among men; and will take an advantage either from the envy, or malice, or the miſtakes of men, to make them enemies to one another. Which would make one wonder to ſee what care and pains ſome men will take, to provoke mankind againſt them; how they will lay about them, and ſnatch at opportunities to make themſelves enemies, as if they were afraid to let the happy occaſion ſlip by them: But all this care and fear ſurely is needleſs; we may ſafely truſt an ill-natur'd world, that we ſhall have enemies enough, without our doing things on our part to provoke and procure them.

But above all, it concerns every man in prudence to take great care not to make perſonal enemies to himſelf; for theſe are the foreſt and the ſureſt of all other, and when there is an opportunity for it, will ſit hardeſt upon us. Injuries done to the publick are certainly the greateſt, and yet they are many times more eaſily forgiven, than thoſe which are done to parti-

SERM. XXXII.

particular perſons. For when revenge is every body's work, it may prove to be no body's. The general wrongs which are done to humane ſociety, do not ſo ſenſibly touch and ſting men, as perſonal injuries and provocations. The law is never angry or in paſſion, and it is not only a great indecency, but a fault, when the judges of it are ſo. Heat of proſecution belongs to particular perſons; and it is their memory of injuries, and deſire to revenge them, and diligence to ſet on and ſharpen the law, that is chiefly to be dreaded: and if the truth were known, it is much to be fear'd that there are almoſt as few private as publick acts of oblivion paſs'd in the world; and they commonly paſs as ſlowly, and with as much difficulty, and not till the grace and good effect of them is almoſt quite loſt.

II. If we ought to be thus affected towards our enemies, how great ought our kindneſs, and the expreſſions of it, to be to others? to thoſe who never diſobliged us, nor did us any injury by word or deed; to thoſe more eſpecially, who ſtand in a nearer relation to us; to our natural kindred, and to our ſpiritual brethren to whom we are ſo ſtrongly link'd and united by the common bond of chriſtianity, and laſtly, to our benefactors, and thoſe who have been before-hand with us in obligation: for all theſe are ſo many ſpecial ties and endearments of men to one another, founded either in nature or religion, or in common juſtice and gratitude. And therefore between all theſe and our enemies we ought to make a very wide and ſenſible difference, in our carriage and kindneſs towards them. And if we do not ſo, we repreſent our SAVIOUR as an unreaſonable lawgiver, and do perverſly interpret this pre-

cept

cept of his contrary to the reaſonable and equitable meaning of it. For whatever degree of kindneſs is here required towards our enemies, it is certain that ſo much more is due to others, as according to the true proportion of our tie and obligation to them they have deſerved at our hands; nothing being more certain than that our bleſſed SAVIOUR, the founder of our religion, did never intend by any precept of it to cancel any real obligation of nature, or juſtice, or gratitude; or to offer violence in the leaſt to the common reaſon of mankind. SERM. XXXIII.

III. Hence we learn the excellency and the reaſonableneſs of the chriſtian religion, which hath carried our duty ſo high in things which do ſo directly tend to the perfection of humane nature, and to the peace of humane ſociety; and which, if all things be rightly conſider'd, are moſt agreeable to the cleareſt and beſt reaſon of mankind: ſo that thoſe things which were heretofore look'd upon, and that only by ſome few of the wiſer ſort, as heroical inſtances of goodneſs, and above the common rate of humanity, are now by the chriſtian religion made the indiſpenſible duties of all mankind. And the precepts of no other religion, that ever yet appeared in the world, have advanced humane nature ſo much above it ſelf, and are ſo well calculated for the peace and happineſs of the world, as the precepts of the chriſtian religion are: for they ſtrictly forbid the doing of injuries, by way of prevention; and in caſe they happen, they endeavour to put a preſent ſtop to the progreſs of them, by ſo ſeverely forbidding the revenging of them.

And yet after all this, it muſt be acknowledg'd to be

SERM. XXXIII.

be a very untoward objection againſt the excellency and efficacy of the chriſtian religion, that the practice of ſo many chriſtians is ſo unequal to the perfection of theſe precepts. For who is there in the changes and revolutions of humane affairs, and when the wheel of providence turns them uppermoſt, and lays their enemies at their feet, that will give them any quarter? Nay, that does not greedily ſeize upon the firſt opportunities of revenge, and like an eagle, hungry for his prey, make a ſudden ſtoop upon them with all his force and violence; and when he hath them in his pounces, and at his mercy, is not ready to tear them in pieces?

So that after all our boaſts of the excellency of our religion, where is the practice of it? this, I confeſs, is a terrible objection indeed; and I muſt intreat of you, my brethren, to help me to the beſt anſwer to it: not by any nice diſtinctions and ſpeculations about it, but by the careful and honeſt practice of this precept of our religion.

This was the old objection againſt philoſophy, that many that were philoſophers in their opinions were faulty in their lives: but yet this was never thought by wiſe men to be a good objection againſt philoſophy. And unleſs we will lay more weight upon the objections againſt religion, and preſs them harder than we think it reaſonable to do in any other caſe, we muſt acknowledge likewiſe, that this objection againſt religion is of no force. Men do not caſt off the art of phyſick, becauſe many phyſicians do not live up to their own rules, and do not themſelves follow thoſe preſcriptions which they think fit to give to others: and there is a plain reaſon for it, becauſe their ſwerving from their own

rules

rules doth not neceſſarily ſignify that their rules are not good, but only that their appetites are unruly, and too hard and headſtrong for their reaſon: nothing being more certain than this, that rules may be very reaſonable, and yet they that give them may not follow them. SERM. XXXIII.

IV. The fourth and laſt inference from this whole diſcourſe ſhall be this, that being convinced by what hath been ſaid upon this argument, of the reaſonableneſs of this duty, we would reſolve upon the practice of it, whenever there is occaſion offer'd for it in the courſe of our lives. I need not to put you in mind, that there is now like to be great occaſion for it: I ſhall only ſay, that whenever there is ſo, nothing can be tied more ſtrictly upon us than this duty is.

It hath often been a great comfort and confirmation to me, to ſee the humanity of the proteſtant religion, ſo plainly diſcovering it ſelf, upon ſo many occaſions, in the practice of the profeſſors of it. And ſetting aſide all other advantages which our religion hath been evidently ſhewn to have above popery in point of reaſon and argument, I cannot for my life but think that to be the beſt religion which makes the beſt men, and from the nature of its principles is apt to make them ſo; moſt kind, and merciful, and charitable; and moſt free from malice, and revenge, and cruelty.

And therefore our bleſſed SAVIOUR, who knew what was in man better than any man that ever was, knowing our great reluctance and backwardneſs to the practice of this duty, hath urged it upon us by ſuch forcible and almoſt violent arguments, that if we have any tenderneſs for our ſelves, we cannot refuſe obedience to it. For he plainly tells us, that no

SERM. XXXII.

ſacrifice that we can offer will appeaſe GOD towards us, ſo long as we ourſelves are implacable to men; ver. 23d of this chapter, "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, "and there remembreſt that thy brother hath ought "againſt thee, leave thy gift before the altar, and go "thy way: firſt go and be reconciled to thy brother, "and then come and offer thy gift." To recommend this duty effectually to us, he gives it a preference to all the poſitive duties of religion: "firſt go and be "reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer "thy gift." 'Till this duty be diſcharged, GOD will accept of no ſervice, no ſacrifice at our hands. And therefore our liturgy doth with great reaſon declare it to be a neceſſary qualification for our worthy receiving of the ſacrament, that we be in love and charity with our neighbours; becauſe this is a moral duty, and of eternal obligation, without which no poſitive part of religion, ſuch as the ſacraments are, can be acceptable to GOD; eſpecially ſince in this bleſſed ſacrament of CHRIST's body and blood we expect to have the forgiveneſs of our ſins ratified and confirmed to us: which how can we hope for from GOD, if we our ſelves be not ready to forgive one another?

"He ſhall have judgment without mercy, ſays St. "James, who hath ſhewed no mercy." And in that excellent form of prayer which our LORD himſelf hath given us, he hath taught us ſo to ask forgiveneſs of GOD, as not to expect it from him, if we do not forgive one another. So that if we do not practiſe this duty, as hard as we think it is, every time that we put up this petition to GOD, "Forgive us our treſpaſſes, as we for-"give them that treſpaſs againſt us;" we ſend up a terrible imprecation againſt ourſelves, and do in effect beg of GOD not to forgive us. And therefore, to imprint

print this matter the deeper upon our minds, our bleſſed SAVIOUR immediately after the recital of this Prayer, hath thought fit to add a very remarkable enforcement of this petition, above all the reſt; "for "if, ſays he, ye forgive men their treſpaſſes, your hea- "venly father will alſo forgive you: but if ye forgive "not men their treſpaſſes, neither will your father for- "give your treſpaſſes." SERM. XXXIII. Matth. vi. 14, 15.

And our SAVIOUR hath likewiſe in his goſpel repreſented to us, both the reaſonableneſs of this duty, and the danger of doing contrary to it, in a very lively and affecting parable, deliver'd by him to this purpoſe: concerning a wicked ſervant, who, when his lord had but juſt before forgiven him a vaſt debt of ten thouſand talents, took his poor fellow-ſervant by the throat, and, notwithſtanding his humble ſubmiſſion and earneſt intreaties to be favourable to him, haled him to priſon for a trifling debt of an hundred pence. And the application which he makes of this parable, at the end of it, is very terrible, and ſuch as ought never to go out of our minds; "ſo likewiſe, ſays he, ſhall my "heavenly father do alſo unto you, if ye do not from "your hearts forgive every one his brother his treſ- "paſſes." One might be apt to think at firſt view, that this parable was over-done, and wanted ſomething of a due decorum; it being hardly credible, that a man after he had been ſo mercifully and generouſly dealt withal, as upon his humble requeſt to have ſo huge a debt ſo freely forgiven, ſhould whilſt the memory of ſo much mercy was freſh upon him, even the very next moment, handle his fellow-ſervant, who had made the ſame humble ſubmiſſion and requeſt to him which he had done to his LORD, with ſo much roughneſs and cruelty, for ſo inconſiderable a ſum. Matth. xviii. 23. Ver. 35.

This,

SERM. XXXIII.

This, I ſay, would hardly ſeem credible; did we not ſee in experience how very unreaſonable and unmerciful ſome men are, and with what confidence they can ask and expect great mercy from GOD, when they will ſhew none to men.

The greatneſs of the injuries which are done to us, is the reaſon commonly pleaded by us why we cannot forgive them. But whoever thou art, that makeſt this an argument why thou canſt not forgive thy brother, lay thine hand upon thine heart, and bethink thyſelf how many more and much greater offences thou haſt been guilty of againſt GOD: look up to that juſt and powerful being that is above, and conſider well, whether thou doſt not both expect and ſtand in need of more mercy and favour from him, than thou canſt find in thy heart to ſhew to thine offending brother?

We have all certainly great reaſon to expect that as we uſe one another, GOD will likewiſe deal with us. And yet after all this, how little is this duty practis'd among chriſtians? and how hardly are the beſt of us brought to love our enemies, and to forgive them? and this, notwithſtanding that all our hopes of mercy and forgiveneſs from GOD do depend upon it. How ſtrangely inconſiſtent is our practice and our hope? and what a wide diſtance is there between our expectations from GOD, and our dealings with men? How very partial and unequal are we, to hope ſo eaſily to be forgiven, and yet to be ſo hard to forgive?

Would we have GOD, for CHRIST's ſake, to forgive us thoſe numberleſs and monſtrous provocations which we have been guilty of againſt his divine majeſty? And ſhall we not for his ſake, for whoſe ſake we ourſelves are forgiven, be willing to forgive one another?

We

SERM. XXXIII.

We think it hard to be oblig'd to forgive great injuries, and often repeated; and yet wo be to us all, and moſt miſerable ſhall we be to all eternity, if GOD do not all this to us, which we think to be ſo very hard and unreaſonable for us to do to one another.

I have ſometimes wonder'd how it ſhould come to paſs, that ſo many perſons ſhould be ſo apt to deſpair of the mercy and forgiveneſs of GOD to them; eſpecially conſidering what clear and expreſs declarations GOD hath made of his readineſs to forgive our greateſt ſins and provocations upon our ſincere repentance: but the wonder will be very much abated, when we ſhall conſider with how much difficulty men are brought to remit great injuries, and how hardly we are perſuaded to refrain from flying upon thoſe who have given us any conſiderable provocation. So that when men look into themſelves, and ſhall carefully obſerve the motions of their own minds towards thoſe againſt whom they have been juſtly exaſperated, they will ſee but too much reaſon to think that forgiveneſs is no ſuch eaſy matter.

But our comfort in this caſe is, that GOD is not as man; "that his ways are not as our ways, nor his "thoughts as our thoughts; but as the heavens are "high above the earth, ſo are his ways above our "ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts."

And the beſt way to keep ourſelves from deſpairing of GOD's mercy and forgiveneſs to us, is to be eaſy to grant forgiveneſs to others: and without this as GOD hath reaſon to deny forgiveneſs to us, ſo we our ſelves have all the reaſon in the world utterly to deſpair of it.

It would almoſt tranſport a chriſtian to read that admirable paſſage of the great heathen emperor and philoſopher

SERM. XXXIII.

M. Aur. Anton. lib. 7.

loſopher M. Aurelius Antoninus, "Can the gods, "ſays he, that are immortal, for the continuance of "ſo many ages, bear without impatience with ſuch "and ſo many ſinners as have ever been; and not on- "ly ſo, but likewiſe take care of them, and provide "for them that they want nothing: and doſt thou ſo "grievouſly take on, as one that can bear with them "no longer? Thou, that art but for a moment of "time; yea, thou that art one of thoſe ſinners thyſelf."

I will conclude this whole diſcourſe with thoſe weighty and pungent ſayings of the wiſe ſon of Sirach,

Eccl. xxiii. 1, 2, 3, 4.

"He that revengeth ſhall find vengeance from the "LORD, and he will certainly retain his ſins. For- "give thy neighbour that hath hurt thee, ſo ſhall "thy ſins alſo be forgiven when thou prayeſt. One "man beareth hatred againſt another, and doth he "ſeek pardon of the LORD? He ſheweth no mercy "to a man like himſelf, and doth he ask forgive- "neſs of his own ſins?

"Enable us, O LORD, by thy grace, to practiſe "this excellent and difficult duty of our religion: and "then, forgive us our treſpaſſes, as we forgive them "that treſpaſs againſt us: for thy mercies ſake, in JE- "SUS CHRIST; to whom with thee, O FATHER, and "the HOLY GHOST, be all honour and glory, adora- "tion and obedience, both now and ever. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON XXXIV.

The care of our souls, the one thing needful.

Preached before the King and Queen at *Hampton-Court*, *April* 14, 1689.

LUKE x. 42.

But one thing is needful.

IN the accounts of wise men, one of the first rules and measures of humane actions is this, "To regard every thing more or less, according to the "degree of its consequence and importance to our "happiness." That which is most necessary to that end, ought in all reason to be minded by us in the first place, and other things only so far as they are consistent with that great end, and subservient to it. SERM. XXXIV.

Our blessed SAVIOUR here tells us "that there is "one thing needful," that is, one thing which ought first and principally to be regarded by us: and what that is, it is of great concernment to us all to know, that we may mind and pursue it as it deserves.

And we may easily understand what it is by considering the context, and the occasion of these words, which was briefly this: our SAVIOUR, as he went about preaching the kingdom of GOD, came into a certain village, where he was entertain'd at the house of two devout sisters. The elder, who had the care and management of the family and the affairs of it,

SERM. XXXIV.

was employed in making entertainment for such a guest: the other sat at our SAVIOUR's feet, attending to the doctrine of salvation which he preach'd.

The elder finding herself not able to do all the business alone, desires of our SAVIOUR that he would command her sister to come and help her. Upon this our SAVIOUR gives her this gentle reprehension, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled a- "bout many things, but one thing is needful." And what that is he declares in the next words, "and "Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not "be taken away from her;" that is, she hath chosen to take care of her salvation, which is infinitely more considerable than any thing else.

Our SAVIOUR doth not altogether blame Martha for her respectful care of him, but commends her sister for her greater care of her soul; which made her either wholly to forget, or unwilling to mind other things at that time. So that, upon the whole matter, he highly approves her wise choice, in preferring an attentive regard to his doctrine, even before that which might be thought a necessary civility to his person.

From the words thus explain'd, the observation which I shall make is this:

That the care of religion and of our souls is the one thing necessary, and that which every man is concern'd in the first place and above all other things to mind and regard.

This observation seems to be plainly contain'd in the text. I shall handle it as briefly as I can; and then by way of application shall endeavour to persuade you and myself to mind this one thing necessary.

And in speaking to this serious and weighty argument, I shall do these two things. First,

SERM. XXXIV.

First, I shall endeavour to shew wherein this care of religion and of our souls does consist.

Secondly, to convince men of the necessity of taking this care.

I. I shall shew wherein this care of religion and of our souls doth consist. And this I shall endeavour to do with all the plainness I can, and so as every one that hears me may understand and be sufficiently directed what is necessary for him to do in order to his eternal salvation.

And of this I shall give an account in the five following particulars, in which I think the main business of religion and the due care of our souls does consist.

First, in the distinct knowledge, and in the firm belief and persuasion of those things which are necessary to be known and believed by us in order to our eternal salvation.

Secondly, in the frequent examination of our lives and actions, and in a sincere repentance for all the errors and miscarriages of them.

Thirdly, in the constant and daily exercise of piety and devotion.

Fourthly, in avoiding those things which are pernicious to our salvation, and whereby men do often hazard their souls.

Fifthly, in the even and constant practice of the several graces and virtues of a good life.

I. The due care of religion and our souls does consist in the distinct knowledge, and in the firm belief and persuasion of those things which are necessary to be known and believ'd by us in order to our eternal salvation.

For this knowledge of the necessary principles and duties of religion is the foundation of all good prac-

SERM. XXXIV

tice, wherein the life of religion doth conſiſt. And without this no man can be truly religious. "With-
Heb. xi. 6. "out faith, ſaith the apoſtle to the hebrews, it is im-
"poſſible to pleaſe GOD: for he that cometh to GOD
"muſt believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of
"them that diligently ſeek him." Now theſe two expreſſions of pleaſing GOD and ſeeking him, are plainly of the ſame importance, and do both of them ſignify religion, or the worſhip and ſervice of GOD; which doth antecedently ſuppoſe our firm belief and perſuaſion of theſe two fundamental principles of all religion, That there is a GOD, and, That he will reward thoſe that ſerve him: becauſe unleſs a man do firſt believe theſe, there would neither be ground nor encouragement for any ſuch thing as religion.

And this knowledge of the neceſſary principles of religion our bleſſed SAVIOUR calls eternal life, becauſe it is ſo fundamentally neceſſary in order to our
Joh. xvii. 3. attaining of it: "This is life eternal, ſays he, to
"know thee the only true GOD; and him whom
"thou haſt ſent, JESUS CHRIST," that is, to be rightly inſtructed in the knowledge of the only true GOD, and of his SON JESUS CHRIST our LORD: under which two general heads are comprehended all the neceſſary principles both of the natural and of the chriſtian religion.

And to the attaining of this knowledge which is abſolutely neceſſary to ſalvation, no ſuch extraordinary pains and ſtudy is requir'd; but only a teachable diſpoſition, and a due application of mind. For whatever in religion is neceſſary to be known by all, muſt in all reaſon be plain and eaſy, and lie level to all capacities; otherwiſe we muſt ſay, that GOD who would have all men to be ſaved, hath not provided for the ſal-

vation

vation of all men. And therefore, now that the knowledge of the true GOD and the light of chriſtianity are ſpread abroad in the world, all that enjoy the goſpel are, or may be, ſufficiently inſtructed in all things neceſſary to their happineſs: unleſs ſuch care be uſed, as is in the church of Rome, to take away the key of knowledge, and to lock up the ſcriptures from the people in an unknown tongue; and this, as they pretend, upon a very charitable conſideration; only it is to be hop'd that it is not true, that the generality of mankind are mad and have need to be kept in the dark. But ſuppoſing men to be allowed thoſe means of knowledge which GOD affords, and hath appointed for us, the great difficulty doth not commonly lie in mens underſtandings, but in their wills: only when men know theſe things, they muſt attend to them and conſider them; that the light which is in their underſtandings may warm their hearts, and have its due influence upon their lives. SERM. XXXIV.

II. The due care of our ſouls conſiſts in the frequent examination of our lives and actions, and in a ſincere repentance for all the errors and miſcarriages of them: in a more particular and deep humiliation and repentance for deliberate and wilful ſins, ſo far as we can call them to our remembrance; and in a general repentance for ſins of ignorance, and infirmity, and ſurprize. In the exerciſe whereof we are always to remember, that the nature of true repentance doth not conſiſt only in an humble confeſſion of our ſins to GOD, and a hearty trouble and contrition for them; but chiefly in the ſtedfaſt purpoſe and reſolution of a better life, and in proſecution of this reſolution, in actual reformation and amendment.

By the conſtant exerciſe hereof, we are put into a ſafe

SERM. XXXIV.

ſafe condition; provided that we perſevere in this holy reſolution and courſe: but if we ſtill retain the love and practice of any known ſin, or if after we have taken up theſe good reſolutions we return again to an evil courſe; this is a clear evidence, either that our repentance was not ſincere at firſt, or that we are relaps'd into our former ſtate: and then our ſouls are ſtill in apparent danger of being loſt, and will continue in that dangerous ſtate, 'till we have renew'd our repentance, and made it good in the following courſe of our lives.

III. The due care of our ſouls conſiſts in the conſtant and daily exerciſe of piety and devotion, both in private, and in publick if there be opportunity for it, eſpecially at proper times and upon more ſolemn occaſions: by fervent prayer to GOD, and by hearing and reading the word of GOD with reverence and godly fear: by frequenting his publick worſhip, and demeaning ourſelves in it with that ſolemnity and ſeriouſneſs which becomes the preſence and ſervice of the great and glorious majeſty of GOD, who obſerves our behaviour and ſees into our hearts: and by receiving the bleſſed ſacrament, as often as we have opportunity, with due preparation and devotion of mind.

For theſe are not only outward teſtimonies of our inward piety, but they are means likewiſe appointed by GOD to improve and confirm us in holineſs and goodneſs. And whoever neglects theſe duties of religion, or performs them in a ſlight and ſuperficial manner, doth plainly ſhew that he hath neither a due ſenſe of GOD, nor care of himſelf: for in vain does any man pretend that he does in good earneſt deſign the end, when he neglects the beſt and moſt proper means for the attainment of it.

IV. The due care of our ſouls conſiſts alſo in avoiding

ing thoſe things which are pernicious to our ſalvation, and whereby men do often hazard their ſouls. Such in general is the practice of any known ſin. By this we do, as it were, run upon the ſword's point, and do endanger our ſalvation as much as a deep wound in our body would do our life: and tho' ſuch a wound may perhaps be cur'd afterwards by repentance, yet no man that commits any wilful ſin knows the diſmal conſequence of it, and whither by degrees it may carry him at laſt: for upon ſuch a provocation GOD may leave the ſinner to himſelf, and withdraw his grace from him, and give him up to a hard and impenitent heart, to proceed from evil to worſe, and from one wickedneſs to another, 'till he be finally ruin'd. So dangerous a thing is it knowingly to offend GOD, and to commit any deliberate act of ſin.

More particularly, an inordinate love of the world is very pernicious to the ſouls of men; becauſe it quencheth the heavenly life, and fills our minds with earthly cares and deſigns; it tempts men to forſake GOD and religion when their worldly intereſts come in competition with them; and betrays them to fraud, and falſhood, and all kind of injuſtice, and "many "other hurtful luſts which drown the ſoul in perdition."

But beſides theſe dangers which are more viſible and apparent, there is another which is leſs diſcernible becauſe it hath the face of piety; and that is faction in religion: by which I mean an unpeaceable and uncharitable zeal about things wherein religion either doth not at all, or but very little conſiſt. For beſides that this temper is utterly inconſiſtent with ſeveral of the moſt eminent chriſtian graces and virtues, as humility, love, peace, meekneſs, and forbearance towards thoſe that differ from us; it hath likewiſe two very

SERM. XXXIV.

very great miſchiefs commonly attending upon it, and both of them pernicious to religion and the ſouls of men.

Firſt, that it takes ſuch men off from minding the more neceſſary and eſſential parts of religion. They are ſo zealous about ſmall things, the tithing of mint, and aniſe, and cummin, that they neglect the weightier things of the law, faith, and mercy, and judgment, and the love of GOD: they ſpend ſo much of their time and heat about things doubtful, that they have no leiſure to mind the things that are neceſſary: and are ſo concern'd about little ſpeculative opinions in religion, which they always call fundamental articles of faith, that the practice of religion is almoſt wholly neglected by them: and they are ſo taken up in ſpying out and cenſuring error and hereſy in others, that they never think of curing thoſe luſts and vices and paſſions which do ſo viſibly reign in themſelves. Deluded people! that do not conſider that the greateſt hereſy in the world is a wicked life, becauſe it is ſo directly and fundamentally oppoſite to the whole deſign of the chriſtian faith and religion: and that do not conſider, that GOD will ſooner forgive a man a hundred defects of his underſtanding than one fault of his will.

Secondly, another great miſchief which attends this temper is, that men are very apt to interpret this zeal of theirs againſt others to be great piety in themſelves, and as much as is neceſſary to bring them to heaven; and to think that they are very religious, becauſe they keep a great ſtir about maintaining the out-works of religion, when it is ready to be ſtarv'd within; and that there needs no more to denominate them good chriſtians, but to be of ſuch a party, and to be liſted of ſuch a church, which they always take for granted

to

to be the only true one; and then zealously to hate, and uncharitably to censure all the rest of mankind. SERM. XXXIV.

How many are there in the world, that think they have made very sure of heaven, not by the old plain way of leaving their sins and reforming their lives, but by a more close and cunning way of carrying their vices along with them into another church, and calling themselves good catholicks, and all others hereticks? and that having done this, they are in a safe condition; as if a mere name would admit a man into heaven, or as if there were any church in the world that had this fantastical privilege belonging to it, that a wicked man might be saved for no other reason but because he is of it.

Therefore, as thou valuest thy soul, take heed of engaging in any faction in religion; because it is an hundred to one but thy zeal will be so employed about lesser things, that the main and substantial parts of religion will be neglected: besides that, a man deeply engag'd in heats and controversies of this nature, shall very hardly escape being possess'd with that spirit of uncharitableness and contention, of peevishness and fierceness, which reigns in all factions, but more especially in those of religion.

V. The due care of our souls consists in the even and constant practice of the several graces and virtues of a good life; or, as the apostle expresseth it, "in "exercising our selves always to have a conscience "void of offence towards GOD and men." For herein is religion best seen, in an equal and uniform practice of every part of our duty: not only in serving GOD devoutly, but in demeaning our selves peaceably and justly, kindly and charitably towards

8.

SERM. XXXIV

all men: not only in reſtraining our ſelves from the outward act of ſin, but in mortifying the inward inclination to it, in ſubduing our luſts, and governing our paſſions, and bridling our tongues. As he that would have a prudent care of his health and life, muſt not only guard himſelf againſt the chief and common diſeaſes which are incident to men, and take care to prevent them; but muſt likewiſe be careful to preſerve himſelf from thoſe which are eſteemed leſs dangerous, but yet ſometimes do prove mortal: he muſt not only endeavour to ſecure his head and heart from being wounded, but muſt have a tender care of every part; there being hardly any diſeaſe or wound ſo ſlight but that ſome have died of it: in like manner, the care of our ſouls conſiſts in an univerſal regard to our duty, and that we be defective in no part of it: though we ought to have a more eſpecial regard to thoſe duties which are more conſiderable, and wherein religion doth mainly conſiſt; as piety towards GOD, temperance and chaſtity in regard of our ſelves, charity towards the poor, truth and juſtice, goodneſs and kindneſs towards all men: but then no other grace and virtue, though of an inferior rank, ought to be neglected by us.

And thus I have endeavour'd, as plainly and briefly as I could, to declare to you in what inſtances the due care of religion and our ſouls doth chiefly conſiſt.

And I would not have any man think that all this is an eaſy buſineſs, and requires but little time to do it in, and that a ſmall degree of diligence and induſtry will ſerve for this purpoſe: to maſter and root out the inveterate habits of ſin, to bring our paſſions under the command and government of our reaſon, and to attain to a good degree of every chriſtian grace and virtue:

virtue: that faith and hope and charity, humility and meekneſs and patience may all have their perfect work; and that, as St. James ſays, "we may "be perfect and entire, wanting nothing;" nothing that belongs to the perfection of a good man, and of a good chriſtian. And this, whenever we come to make the trial, we ſhall find to be a great and a long work. SERM. XXXIV.

Some indeed would make religion to be a very ſhort and eaſy buſineſs, and to conſiſt only in believing what CHRIST hath done for us, and relying confidently upon it: which is ſo far from being the true notion of chriſtian faith, that, if I be not much miſtaken, it is the very definition of preſumption. For the bible plainly teacheth us, that unleſs our faith work by charity, and purify our hearts and reform our lives; unleſs like Abraham's faith it be perfected by works, it is but a dead faith, and will in no wiſe avail to our juſtification and ſalvation. And our bleſſed SAVIOUR, the great author and finiſher of our faith, hath no where, that I know of, ſaid one word to this purpoſe, that faith ſeparated from obedience and a good life will ſave any man: But he hath ſaid very much to the contrary, and that very plainly. For he promiſeth bleſſedneſs to none, but thoſe who live in the practice of thoſe chriſtian graces and virtues which are particularly mention'd by him in the beginning of his excellent ſermon upon the mount; of humility, and repentance, and meekneſs, and righteouſneſs, and mercifulneſs, and purity, and peaceableneſs, and patience under perſecution and ſufferings for righteouſneſs ſake. And afterwards in the ſame ſermon, "Not every one, ſaith "he, that ſaith unto me, LORD, LORD, ſhall en- Matth. v. 3, 4, &c. Matth. vii. 21.

SERM. XXXIV. "ter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth "the will of my FATHER which is in heaven."

Ver. 24. And again, "whoſoever heareth theſe ſayings of "mine, and doth them, I will liken him unto a "wiſe man which built his houſe upon a rock."

Ver. 26, 27. And afterwards he tells us, that whoſoever builds his hopes of eternal happineſs upon any other foundation, than the faith of the goſpel and the practice of its precepts, doth build his houſe upon the ſand; which when it comes to be tried by the rain and the winds, "will fall; and the fall of it will be great."

John xiii. 17. And elſewhere; "if ye know theſe things, happy "are ye if ye do them." And he does very ſeverely check the vain confidence and preſumption of thoſe, who will needs rely upon him for ſalvation without keeping his commandments, "Why call ye

Luke vi. 46. "me, ſays he, LORD, LORD, and do not the things "which I ſay?"

Does any man think that he can be ſaved without

1 John v. 3. loving GOD and CHRIST? "And this, ſaith St. John, "is the love of GOD, that we keep his command-

1 John ii. 4. "ments:" and again, "he that ſaith I know him," and by the ſame reaſon, he that ſaith I love him, "and keepeth not his commandments, he is a liar,

John xiv. 15. "and the truth is not in him. If ye love me, ſaith "our bleſſed LORD, keep my commandments:"

Ver. 21. And again, "he that hath my commandments and "keepeth them, he it is that loveth me."

Does any man think, that any but the children of GOD ſhall be heirs of eternal life? Hear then what

1 John iii. 7. St. John ſaith, "Little children, let no man deceive "you, he that doth righteouſneſs is righteous, even as

Ver. 10. "he is righteous:" and again, "in this the chil-"dren of GOD are manifeſt, and the children of the "devil,

" devil, he that doth not righteouſneſs is not of " GOD. SERM. XXXIV.

In a word, this is the perpetual tenour of the bible, from the beginning of it to the end. " If thou doſt well, " ſaith GOD to Cain, ſhalt thou not be acceepted? " Gen. iii. 7. and again, " ſay ye to the righteous, it ſhall be well Iſa. iii. " with him, for they ſhall eat the fruit of their do- 10, 11. " ings: wo unto the wicked, it ſhall be ill with him, " for the reward of his hands ſhall be given him." And in the goſpel, when the young man came to our SAVIOUR to be inſtructed by him, what good thing he ſhould do that he might inherit eternal life, our LORD gives him this ſhort and plain advice, " If Matt. xix. " thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." 17. And in the very laſt chapter of the bible we find this ſolemn declaration, " Bleſſed are they that do his " commandments, that they may have right to the " tree of life, and enter in through the gates into the " city," that is, into heaven, which the apoſtle to the Hebrews calls " the city which hath foundations, " whoſe builder and maker is GOD." So vain and groundleſs is the imagination of thoſe, who truſt to be ſaved by an idle and ineffectual faith, without holineſs and obedience of life.

II. I proceed now in the ſecond place to convince us all, if it may be, of the neceſſity of minding religion and our ſouls. When we call any thing neceſſary, we mean that it is ſo in order to ſome end, which cannot be attained without it. We call thoſe things the neceſſaries of life, without which men cannot ſubſiſt and live in a tolerable condition in this world: and that is neceſſary to our eternal happineſs, without which it cannot be attain'd. Now happineſs being our chief end, whatever is neceſſary to that is more neceſſary

SERM. XXXIV.

necessary than any thing else; and in comparison of that, all other things not only may, but ought to be neglected by us.

Now to convince men of the necessity of religion, I shall briefly shew, that it is a certain way to happiness: that it is certain that there is no other way but this: and that if we neglect religion, we shall certainly be extremely and for ever miserable.

First, that religion is a certain way to happiness. And for this we have GOD's express declaration and promise. The best assurance that can be. "He that cannot lye hath promised eternal life, to them who by "patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory "and honour and immortality." All the happiness that we can desire, and of which the nature of man is capable, is promised to us upon the terms of religion, "upon our denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, "and living soberly, and righteously and godly in "this present world:" A mighty reward for a little service; an eternity of happiness, of joys unspeakable and full of glory, for the diligence and industry of a few days: a happiness large as our wishes, and lasting as our souls.

Secondly, 'tis certain also that there is no other way to happiness but this. He, who alone can make us happy, hath promised it to us upon these and no other terms. He hath said, "that if we live after the "flesh, we shall die; but if by the SPIRIT we mortify "the deeds of the flesh, we shall live: that "without holiness no man shall see the LORD:" and, that he that lives in the habitual practice of any vice, "of covetousness, or adultery, or malice, or "revenge, shall not enter into the kingdom of God:" and we have reason to believe him concerning the terms

terms of this happineſs, and the means of attaining it, by whoſe favour and bounty alone we hope to be make partakers of it. SERM. XXXIV.

And if GOD had not ſaid it in his word, yet the nature and reaſon of the thing doth plainly declare it. For religion is not only a condition of our happineſs, but a neceſſary qualification and diſpoſition for it. We muſt be like to GOD in the temper of our minds, before we can find any felicity in the enjoyment of him. Men muſt be purged from their luſts, and from thoſe ill-natur'd and deviliſh paſſions of malice, and envy, and revenge, before they can be fit company for their heavenly FATHER, and meet to dwell with him, "who is love, and dwells in love."

Thirdly, if we neglect religion, we ſhall certainly be extremely and for ever miſerable. The word of truth hath ſaid it, "that indignation and wrath, tri- "bulation and anguiſh ſhall be upon every ſoul of "man that doth evil." Nay, if GOD ſhould hold his hand, and ſhould inflict no poſitive torment upon ſinners, yet they could not ſpare themſelves, but would be their own executioners and tormentors. The guilt of that wicked life which they had led in this world, and the ſtings of their own conſciences muſt neceſſarily make them miſerable, whenever their own thoughts are let looſe upon them; as they will certainly be in the other world, when they ſhall have nothing either of pleaſure or buſineſs to divert them.

So that if we be concern'd, either to be happy hereafter, or to avoid thoſe miſeries which are great and dreadful beyond all imagination, it will be neceſſary for us to mind religion; without which we can neither attain that happineſs, nor eſcape thoſe miſeries.

All that now remains, is to perſuade you and my ſelf

SERM. XXXIV.

ſelf ſeriouſly to mind this one thing neceſſary. And to this end, I ſhall apply my diſcourſe to two ſorts of perſons; thoſe who are remiſs in a matter of ſo great concernment, and thoſe who are groſly careleſs, and mind it not all.

Firſt, to thoſe who are remiſs in a matter of ſuch vaſt concernment: who mind the buſineſs of religion, in ſome degree, but not ſo heartily and vigorouſly as a matter of ſuch infinite conſequence doth require and deſerve.

And here I fear the very beſt are greatly defective; and ſo much the more to be blamed, by how much they are more convinc'd than others, of the neceſſity of a religious and holy life; and that without this no man ſhall ever be admitted into the manſions of the bleſſed: they believe likewiſe, that according to the degrees of every man's holineſs and virtue in this life, will be the degrees of his happineſs in the other; "that he that ſows ſparingly ſhall reap ſparingly, and "he that ſows plentifully ſhall reap plentifully;" and that the meaſure of every man's reward ſhall be according to his improvement of the talents that were committed to him.

But how little do men live under the power of theſe convictions? and notwithſtanding we are allur'd by the moſt glorious promiſes and hopes, and aw'd by the greateſt fears, and urg'd by the moſt forcible argument in the world, the evident neceſſity of the thing; yet how faintly do we run the race that is ſet before us? how frequently and how eaſily are we ſtop'd or diverted in our chriſtian courſe by very little temptations? how cold, and how careleſs, and how inconſtant are we in the exerciſes of piety, and how defective in every part of our duty? did we act reaſon-

reasonably, and as men use to do in matters of much less moment, we could not be so indifferent about a thing so necessary, so slight and careless in a matter of life and death, and upon which all eternity doth depend. SERM. XXXIV.

Let us then shake off this sloth and security, and resolve to make that the great business of time, which is our great concernment to all eternity: and when we are immers'd in the cares and business of this life, and troubled about many things, let this thought often come into our minds, that there is one thing needful, and which therefore deserves above all other things to be regarded by us.

Secondly, There are another sort of persons, who are grosly careless of this one thing necessary, and do not seem to mind it at all: Who go on securely in an evil course, as if either they had no souls, or no concernment for them. I may say to these as the master of the ship did to Jonah, when he was fast asleep in the storm, "What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise "and call upon thy GOD." When our souls are every moment in danger of sinking, it is high time for us to awake out of sleep, to ply every oar, and to use all possible care and industry to save a thing so precious from a danger so threatning and so terrible.

We are apt enough to be sensible of the force of this argument of necessity in other cases, and very carefully to provide against the pressing necessities of this life, and how to avoid those great temporal evils of poverty and disgrace, of pain and suffering: but the great necessity of all, and that which is mainly incumbent upon us, is to provide for eternity, to secure the everlasting happiness, and to prevent the endless and in-

SERM. XXXIV.

ſupportable miſeries of another world. This, this, is the one thing neceſſary; and to this we ought to bend and apply all our care and endeavours.

If we would fairly compare the neceſſity of things, and wiſely weigh the concernments of this life and the other in a juſt and equal balance, we ſhould be aſhamed to miſplace our diligence and induſtry as we do; to beſtow our beſt thoughts and time about theſe vain and periſhing things, and to take no care about that better part which cannot be taken from us. Fond and vain men that we are! who are ſo ſolicitous how we ſhall paſs a few days in this world, but matter not what ſhall become of us for ever.

But as careleſs as we are now about theſe things, time will come when we ſhall ſadly lay them to heart, and when they will touch us to the quick: when we come to lie upon a death-bed, if GOD ſhall be pleas'd to grant us then ſo much time and uſe of our reaſon as to be able to recollect ourſelves, we ſhall then be convinc'd how great a neceſſity there was of minding our ſouls, and of the prodigious folly of neglecting them, and of our not being ſenſible of the value of them, 'till we are ready to deſpair of ſaving them.

But, bleſſed be GOD, this is not yet our caſe, though we know not how ſoon it may be. Let us then be wiſe, and conſider theſe things in time, leſt death and deſpair ſhould overtake and oppreſs us at once.

You that are young, be pleas'd to conſider that this is the beſt opportunity of your lives, for the minding and doing of this work. You are now moſt capable of the beſt impreſſions, before the habits of Vice have taken deep root, and your hearts "be "harden'd through the deceitfulneſs of ſin: this is "the acceptable time, this is the day of ſalvation."

And

SERM. XXXIV.

And there is likewise a very weighty consideration to be urg'd upon those that are old, if there be any that are willing to own themselves so; that this is the last opportunity of their lives, and therefore they should lay hold of it, and improve it with all their might: for it will soon be past, and when it is, nothing can call it back.

It is but a very little while before we shall all certainly be of this mind, that the best thing we could have done in this world, was to prepare for the other. Could I represent to you that invisible world which I am speaking of, you would all readily assent to this counsel, and would be glad to follow it and put it speedily in practice. Do but then open your eyes, and look a little before you to the things which are not far off from any of us, and to many of us may perhaps be much nearer than we are aware: let us but judge of things now, as we shall all shortly judge of them: and let us live now, as after a few days we shall every one of us wish with all our souls that we had liv'd; and be as serious, as if we were ready to step into the other world, and to enter upon that change which death will quickly make in every one of us. Strange stupidity of men! that a change so near, so great, so certain, should affect us so coldly, and be so little consider'd and provided for by us: that the things of time should move us so much, and the things of eternity so little. What will we do when this change comes, if we have made no preparation for it?

If we be christians, and do verily believe the things which I am speaking of, and that after a few days more are pass'd, death will come, and draw aside that thick veil of sense and security which now hides these things from us; and shew us that fearful and amazing

ſight which we are now ſo loth to think upon: I ſay, if we believe this, it is time for us to be wiſe and ſerious.

And happy that man, who in the days of his health hath retir'd himſelf from the noiſe and tumult of this world, and made that careful preparation for death and a better life, as may give him that conſtancy and firmneſs of ſpirit, as to be able to bear the thoughts and approaches of his great change without amazement; and to have a mind almoſt equally pois'd between that ſtrong inclination of nature which makes us deſirous to live, and that wiſer dictate of reaſon and religion which ſhould make us willing and contented to die whenever GOD thinks fit.

Many of us do not now ſo clearly diſcern theſe things, becauſe our eyes are dazzled with the falſe light and ſplendor of earthly felicity: but this aſſuredly is more worth than all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, to be able to poſſeſs our ſouls at ſuch a time, and to be at perfect peace with our own minds, having our hearts fixed truſting in GOD: to have our accounts made up, and eſtate of our immortal ſouls as well ſettled and ſecur'd, as, by the aſſiſtance of GOD's grace, humane care and endeavour, tho' mix'd with much humane frailty, is able to do.

And if we be convinc'd of theſe things, we are utterly inexcuſable if we do not make this our firſt and great care, and prefer it to all other intereſts whatſoever. And to this end, we ſhould reſolutely diſentangle our ſelves from worldly cares and incumbrances; at leaſt ſo far, that we may have competent liberty and leiſure to attend this great concernment, and to put our ſouls into a fit poſture and preparation for another world: that when ſickneſs and death ſhall come, we may not act our laſt part indecently and confuſedly,

confuſedly, and have a great deal of work to do when we ſhall want both time and all other advantages to do it in: whereby our ſouls, when they will ſtand moſt in need of comfort and ſupport, will unavoidably be left in a trembling and diſconſolate condition, and in an anxious doubtfulneſs of mind what will become of them for ever. SERM. XXXIV.

To conclude, this care of religion and our ſouls is a thing ſo neceſſary, that in compariſon of it we are to neglect the very neceſſaries of life. So our LORD teacheth us, "Take no thought, ſaying, what ſhall "we eat? or what ſhall we drink? or wherewithal "ſhall we be clothed? but ſeek ye firſt the king- "dom of GOD and his righteouſneſs." The calls of GOD and religion are ſo very preſſing and importunate, that they admit of no delay or excuſe whatſoever: this our SAVIOUR ſignifies to us by denying the diſciple, whom he had call'd to follow him, leave to go and bury his father, "Let the dead, "ſays he, bury their dead, but do thou follow me." Matth. vi. 31, 33.

There is one thing needful, and that is the buſineſs of religion, and the care of our immortal ſouls, which whatever we neglect ſhould be carefully minded and regarded by every one of us. "O that "there were ſuch a heart in us! O that we were "wiſe, that we underſtand this, that we would "conſider our latter end!" Which GOD grant we may all do, in this our day, for his mercies ſake in JESUS CHRIST, to whom with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST, be all honour and glory, now and ever. Amen.

A Table

A Table of the Texts of each Sermon.

SERMON XX.

JOHN xiii. 34, 35. *A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another: By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.* page 7

SERMON XXI.

1 JOHN iv. 1. *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of* GOD; *because many false prophets are gone out into the world.* p. 29

SERMON XXII.

HEB. vi. 16. *An oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.* p. 63

SERMON XXIII.

LUKE xx. 37, 38. *Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the* LORD *the* GOD *of Abraham, and the* GOD *of Isaac, and the* GOD *of Jacob. For he is not a* GOD *of the dead, but of the living: for all live to him.* p. 97

SERMON XXIV.

2 COR. v. 6. *Wherefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the* LORD. p. 138

SERMON XXV.

1 COR. xi. 26, 27, 28. *For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the* LORD'S *death 'till he come.*

Where-

Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the LORD *unworthily, is guilty of the body and blood of the* LORD.

But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. p. 163

SERMON XXVI.

A Discourse against Transubstantiation. p. 198

SERMON XXVII.

JOSHUA xxiv. 15. *If it seem evil unto you to serve the* LORD, *choose you this day whom you will serve.* p. 247

SERMON XXVIII.

JOSHUA xxiv. 15. *If it seem evil unto you to serve the* LORD, *choose you this day whom you will serve.* p. 269

SERMON XXIX.

JEREM. xiii. 23. *Can the ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil.* p. 294

SERMON XXX.

MATTHEW xxiii. 13. *Wo unto you scribes and pharisees, hypocrites; for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; and ye neither go in your selves, neither suffer ye them that are entring to go in.* p. 314

SERMON XXXI.

MATTHEW xxv. 1, 2, &c. *Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom,*

And five of them were wise, and five were foolish, &c. p. 341

SERMON

SERMON XXXII.

EZRA ix. 13, 14. *And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass; seeing that thou our* GOD *hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such a deliverance as this:*

Should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? wouldest not thou be angry with us 'till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping? p. 371

SERMON XXXIII.

MATTHEW v. 44. *But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you.* p. 398

SERMON XXXIV.

LUKE x. 42. *But one thing is needful.* p. 425

The End of the Second Volume.